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THE MAGAZINE OF MODERN LITERATURE

APRIL, 1916
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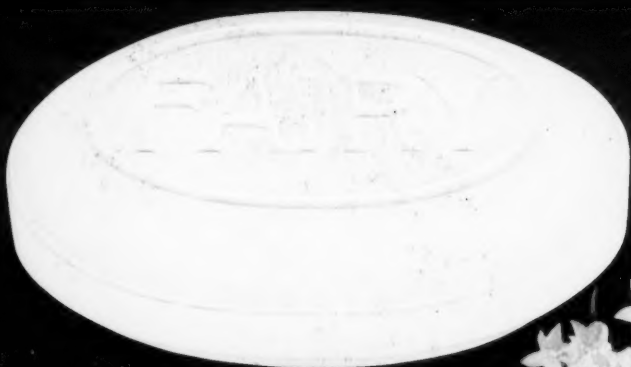
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Novel

by

Horace
Fish

Howard Chandler Christy, 1916

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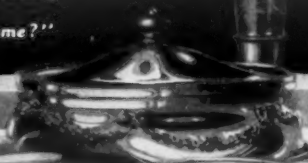
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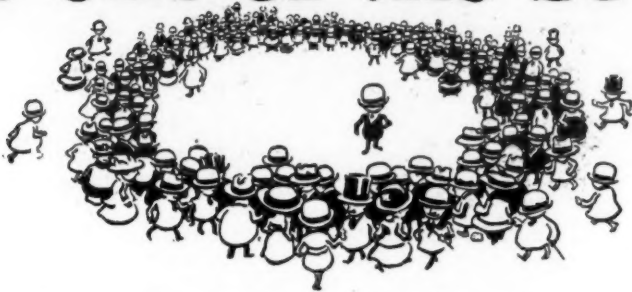
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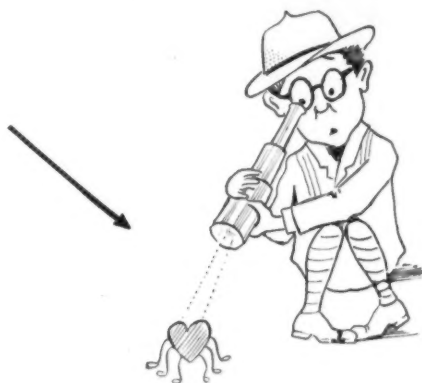
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(See page 159)

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AINSLEE'S

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXVII.

APRIL, 1916.

No. 3.



CHAPTER I.

THIS is a pious tale about answers to prayer, but it begins with the devil and his noisomest work—a vulgar rumpus. The worst dispute in Terassa's history was in violent progress, and between her two fondest friends—if, indeed, they still were friends, and if, indeed, a completely hopeless dispute may be said to progress.

"You have called me your best friend, padre," shouted Rosa; "and I have confessed to a slight tenderness for you, yet here we stand stomach to stomach in the road, like a fishwife and a pugilist!"

They were certainly face to face, if countenance may be given to Rosa's word; and, though the priest's wrath was righteous, it was wrath, none the less.

"Rosa," he cried angrily, "when you are in one of these humors, I would rather ask the *devil's* advice than yours!" And he sat desperately down upon his doorstep, with his back to her.

"Why not the American's, even, if your purpose is to be profane?" cried Rosa.

The priest started, and looked swiftly up at her gaudily dressed figure.

"Are you back at your old trick of mind reading, Rosa? That was the very thought passing through my head!"

He knew that this would irritate her, for she despised the Americano.

"Well, well!" she answered airily. "You then admit that Americans are worse than the devil?"

"Rosa, go home, go home!" implored the padre.

"Then you really do not care for my advice?" said Rosa.

"Go home!" said Padre Pedro.

"As you hurl me away from the door of your house," said Rosa, "I will go. But I will not go home. I will go up to the fonda and teach Inés to play on the piano."

The priest sprang to his feet with a gasp.

"You shall do nothing of the kind!" he cried. "What has come to you,

Rosa? You know you hate Inés most wickedly! You plan this foolishness to make her absurd! You yourself play the piano abominably! There is din enough in town already! I would rather listen to——"

"The devil!" said Rosa; and, with a toss of her erect and aged head, she marched defiantly down the Chasm Road.

The padre blushed as he sank wearily again to the doorstep. That sorrowful name came rarely to his lips. But to find all his people sulky in September, with the town prosperous and the weather fine, simply because he would allow no festival this autumn, had gone like a blade to his heart. Yet, if ever the devil had taken a couple of holidays and cut capers to astonish the natives of an innocent town, it had been in Terassa last fall, at the first wine festival, and in Terassa last spring, at the festival of the statue. Could it be that his beloved people did not *care*? Had they forgotten so soon? Had they forgotten Margarita and her sorry history? Could they drink wine at another festival, remembering her?

A small brown arm was slipped under his big black sleeve, and he glanced down in surprise. In remembering his first beloved orphan, he had forgotten his last.

"I do not desire a festival, padre," said Tito affectionately. "And I desire that that should be a comfort to your troubled mind. I could never stand it, I think, thinking of the crime I committed at the first, last, or other one. I would weep all the time, I think, thinking how I stole the monkey from the magician. I think I think too much about it *without* a festival."

Tito had lately been having grammar lessons.

The padre caught him in his arms and kissed him.

"My one faithful Terassan!" He smiled. "You do comfort me, Tito.

And I wish that you were old enough to advise me. It seems strange that, in order to find some medicine for my loved Spanish town, I must seek the help of a stranger within her gates, a foreigner, an Americano."

"The Americano! *O mi Dios! Mi Dios!*" cried Tito, bursting into a flood of tears. And, with heartbroken sobs, he rolled over and over into the Chasm Road and lay there, wailing.

The padre rose and stood over him, terrified.

"What is it, Tito? What is the matter? What is it?"

"He told me not to tell!" howled Tito. "I dare not tell! He told me not to tell!"

The priest's heart sank. Was his new friend to prove a source of unhappiness, too? This intensest of his small orphans was sometimes a barometer of spiritual weather. In looking back across this year, it seemed to Padre Pedro's troubled mind like a long, cloudy day, into which, suddenly, sunlight had struggled—as the young Americano, footsore, sick, and weary, had struggled into Terassa and, saluting him in husky, awkward Mexican Spanish, had asked him, to his amazement, the way to the parrot woman's house. Together, the priest and Simpatica had dragged him back to health and pushed and pulled him through necessary samples of the Castilian dictionary. And the padre had learned to laugh as he had not laughed since Margarita had gone away. Téodor—Tédi— The priest could not, with the most religious of endeavor, say "Theodore"; it was useless, hopeless. And Ted—that had been attempted and abandoned; he could manage it only when he could remember to rhyme it with a list of Spanish syllables that Tédi had taught him. He laughed now, remembering the lessons of give-and-take in Margarita's house, which he had learned at last to call Sim-

patica's—the hardest lesson of the summer. But his laugh ceased as abruptly as it had begun.

"Tito," he demanded, "this much you must tell me instantly—has Téodor done something to make you weep?"

"No, but he is going to!" said Tito pessimistically. He was sitting cross-legged in the middle of the road, completely covered with white dust and gazing dismally out across the valley like a small clay Buddha.

"In the United States, the children never cry, Tito!" said a voice behind them; and, as the small Buddha leaped up like a rocket, so did the priest's heart, too, just as instinctively, and he turned with a joyous exclamation.

"Téodor! Gooth mornick!" And he held forth both his hands, hoping and praying that what he had uttered was English.

"That will do nicely, padre," said the young American gravely; "though this is *tardes*, and *tardes* is afternoon."

"Haf-ta-nun," repeated the priest obediently.

Tito was fidgeting at the American's sleeve.

"Not even when you left them, Téodor? Did the children of the United States not cry even then?"

Theodore's gray eyes flickered with amusement, but his lips did not smile, and his voice was still grave.

"When I had left, I was not there to see, Mr. Señor. And, before I had left, they did not know that I had gone."

"Tito," smiled the padre, "I wish you to be gone. Tell Simpatica that I would like to talk to her. Come back, if you like, but mind you bring her with you!"

As the dirty figure ran off, the priest stood studying Theodore from head to feet—the fair face, with its light skin and warm, blond coloring, the cool gray eyes, the crisp brown hair, the sinewy, athletic figure.

Then he laughed again.

"Always you make me laugh, Téodor—I do not know quite why. Perhaps like Cortes, looking at an Aztec—pleased, my friend, pleased, but puzzled. Yet it is not at you that I laugh—it is at myself—that whenever I am troubled about mine own people, I seek you, a foreigner, to set me right."

"And what is the row? That, padre, is English for Spanish," said Theodore.

"Perhaps I am oversensitive, Tédi," hesitated the padre.

"Come," said Theodore persuasively, "I have news, too. But yours first. What have you on your mind except the shaved spot? That is English, padre. In Spanish, what matter presses on your—heart?"

"My people!" cried the priest impulsively. "Mine own people, Téodor! Last year Terassa held her first wine festival, as you have heard; and, in spite of the tragedy I have told you of, the townsfolk thirst for another one this year! My heart is not in it, and they know that! I cannot, *will* not have it, and yet they are not kind to me about it! How shall I quiet them, without being harsh? I detest authority in these childlike whims of my people. I should like to distract and amuse their thoughts till the wine season has gone by. You have American wits, Tédi. Will you use them in a Spanish matter, for a poor old man whose feelings have been hurt?"

The American patted the priest's shoulder reassuringly.

"There, there, you take it too hard, padre! The *Estados Unidos* would never do for you! If there came a strike, your eyes would be full of tears, instead of your voice full of calls for the militia. Now, what you want is to count how many of your dear children have complained, and see, on second thoughts, whether you exaggerated. *Quién sabe?*"

"Perhaps you are right," said the padre, brightening. "Always you some-

how cheer me, Téodor! But there was Rosa—there were Gil and Sancho, who actually succeeded in making Benito their spokesman, against his pious nature! And the little boys are discontented. Even Toninio, who was concerned in last year's tragedy and shrinks from the very thought of festivals, cannot put his spirit into our little boys."

"I will cut you thirty good, stout switches," offered Theodore.

The padre laughed.

"Well, well, I have exaggerated, I admit. But will you help me in this way, Téodor? Will you and Simpatica give an entertainment? It might take the town's mind from the subject—you with your acrobatics, she with her little birds. That is why I have sent for her. Indeed, I know you will put those United States wits on it, Tédi."

But a queer cloud had come into the young man's eyes, and he turned away sharply and walked several steps into the road. Hurt and astonished, the priest stared after him.

"But surely you do not refuse me, Téodor? Something has not happened? You are going to give me your heart in this, dear friend?"

"No, padre."

As Teddy faced him, the blond cheeks were flushed, the gray eyes embarrassed.

"I told you I had news of my own, padre. Here it is: This afternoon I am leaving you. I am leaving Terassa."

After an amazed, silent moment, the priest laughed again.

"You are using those wits already, Téodor. So that is what made Tito cry—and I do not wonder! It is not a kindly joke, but I suppose it is funny in America. What is the answer to it, Téodor?"

"I mean it, padre. To-day I leave Terassa."

The whole subject of the wine fes-

tival was swept in one stroke from the padre's mind.

"But, Téodor," he cried excitedly, "I cannot believe, I cannot understand! When you came here, you were starved and lame and friendless! Terassa welcomed you, and to-day you are strong and agile; you have friends to the full number of my people; you are at work in our vineyards and earning a handsome living! Will you, then, take to adventuring again—to the rough road that lamed you? Why is it? Why——"

But he choked off his sentence with an almost tearful punctuation, and sat upon the poor little doorstep with a heaviness that shook the small adobe house.

Theodore walked over to him, sat down beside him, and threw a sun-burned arm across his skirted knee.

"Attend you to the American, *padre mio*. It is time for me to move. Terassa is not the place for a humble, hard-working American bicyclist. Sabe? In Spanish, let me remind you of the great history of my life. In English, here's facts. When the circus was wound up for Bilbao, and the alarm went off sixty miles from Toulouse, I fell through a crack in the plank and broke my leg and my handlebars. Namely, it was a case of Toulouse for Teddy, on one knee and one wrist, with a bicycle in my pocket instead of any change. Well, Theodore, padre, had been with that half-moon of a circus just two nights and a half, yet the parrot woman follows me out of the tent and makes me take her last copper centimo—in French, twenty-one francs.

"Well, later on I had jobs that seemed to book always south, mountains or not; and when I woke up, one day in San Sebastian—king and babies there for the summer, and a good show to hand them—I had a chance to sign up by sailboat for Buenos Aires. But Bilbao was where the parrot lady had

been winging for, and I turned away from Pleasant Breezes and sailed inland. I had forty-two pesetas, some of them still francs, but better silver than Spanish, and it cost me twenty-one to find her trail. That was at Ruby. Two days from Ruby here, with no food, for I never could have digested one of those twenty-one leftover pesetas, padre.

"Well, I got here, and I paid her back. In English, that's me. In Spanish, such, O father, is my character. And she said, 'This is fate! Stay! The padre of our little town will want you to.' And you said, 'God intended this! Stay! I want you to!' Well, that day I wanted to. And so on, up to date. But present company being accounted for, you dagos are too romantic for Theodore, padre? Dagos, padre, is English for kind hearts just opposite the United States. Terassa makes me nervous—in Spanish, gives me an American ailment. I work six hours a day here, and live on the fat of the land. Good Americans are supposed to pity the blind, not to pick bunches of grapes off them! Anyhow, not for six hours a day and board free. So I am going, padre."

There were undeniable tears in the priest's eyes now, and his voice was reproachful.

"There is something else in this, Téodor! You have some other reason!"

"Much reasons, padre!" exclaimed the youth, with a dive into vivid idiom. "The twenty-first of September, padre, is my moving day. On the twenty-first of September, I left Kingdom Come and arrived in America. To-day is the twenty-first of September, and I am twenty-one. I have seen Arizona, Mexico, and the Iberian Peninsula, Hoboken, Paris, and Terassa. And something tells me I am old enough now to see Barcelona. Then I feel that I must once more earn an honest liv-

ing fooling the public by seeming to stand on one ear on my bicycle. I have enough grape juice saved to buy a new machine, and health enough—God bless you and Simpatica!—to ride it up the new cathedral spire and frighten the poor little street children. Besides, padre, Terassa gets in one's blood, and—I'm afraid of marrying a Spaniard."

"Téodor!" cried the padre, in astonishment.

"I see it going on all around me, padre, and it might happen to me any minute."

"And why not?" demanded Padre Pedro. "Nothing could more delight me, Téodor."

"Nor less delight me!" ejaculated the American. "No *hay nada* doing, padre! Believe me, the three worst things that can happen to a man happen in Spain. One is to be the *puntillero* in the bullfight for your job. One is to say 'mañana' without laughing. And one is to marry a Spanish woman."

Despite his heavy heart, the padre smiled.

"We ignorant Spaniards have not objected to you, my American friend!" But, at the boy's swift blush, he added quickly: "What is your objection to Spanish women, Tédi?"

Theodore brooded a moment.

"I will put all my thousand reasons into one loud Spanish one, padre. They are *tricky*. I like adventures, I like very exciting ones, but—I do not want a trickstress for a wife."

"Yet," smiled the padre, "as you just now said, 'No *hay nada* doing'—which I understand as I would a song without words—and were able to sing it so confidently, why are you running away in terror? What has frightened you so?"

"Well, padre," said Theodore slowly, "I am not one to tell tales out of school, but this seems to be school, and Juanita proposed to me this morning."

The padre sprang up violently.

"What? She is mischievous, but I can scarcely believe you, T  dor! I will find her at once! I will——"

"Sit down, padre, sit down!" commanded Teddy, pulling him back by the skirt. "It was the pretty lady's privilege, and you must not chide her. She seemed quite set on it—she even offered not to have a family, if that would help any with an American. I was not badly frightened, padre, but, believe me, the pretty Juanita will Spanish some one yet."

"T  dor," gasped Padre Pedro, "through all your banter and your astounding announcements, I feel some reason yet that you do not tell. I will not argue that I have been good to you, but Simpatica has, and all Terassa has. And, in their names, I demand of you to tell me the full truth."

And he caught the boy's shoulders with hands as forceful as his words, and gazed straight into the handsome face that lowered its eyes and blushed.

"Well, *padre mio*," said Theodore, at last, with a queer little laugh and his face still crimson, "it is this way: Any man who wanders—wanders after something. And if it is not a point of geography, then it must be the only other point in life—a woman. In the case of this roamer, he cannot tell you what her face is like—never having seen it. But he knows when the face he looks at is not it. Well, I have been here three months, padre—three years American!—and I know this—that she is not in Terassa."

Tears sprang into the priest's blue eyes again, and the priest's hands sought and tightly held the boy's.

"May not God be in this? May she not come here, T  di, by chance, as you did?"

"Fate? Fate again, thou Spaniard?" laughed T  dor. "No, padre, I think I will find her where I have always lived and looked before—in the circus

or something kin to it. I was never the cherry-colored cat, or the hind legs of Evangeline, but still the pink-and-spangles is my—my life. Qu  n sabe? Either Ted on a trapeze, with her watching, or she in a gauzy tableau, and Ted in the audience. I would really enjoy finding her, padre, at the top of the spire, when I ride up the new cathedral!"

"T  di, T  di," cried the priest, "I believe you Americans are more romantic than we kind hearts just opposite the United States! You are wilder than Don Quixote, who was content to ride a windmill, though there were giant cathedrals in the earth in those days. But you shall not leave us, T  di! No, not to-day, not to-day! You shall sleep on this whim to-night, and, while you sleep, I shall pray that she shall come to Terassa."

But the gray eyes met his squarely without a smile, and the American's jaw set stubbornly.

"No, padre. In your own pet Spanish, 'I have said.' The lady is not here, and I am going."

The padre seized his wrist. At sight of the resolute mouth, he had lowered his eyes, and he was standing with bowed, uncovered head.

"Can you not see that I am praying, T  di? I believe in direct answers to prayer! Will you make me the favor to wait until I have finished? Then I will tell you what I have prayed for, T  dor."

CHAPTER II.

"Amen!" said the padre.

He was still holding Theodore tight by the wrist. As he opened his grave blue eyes, a sharp exclamation came from him. He stood motionless for an instant, and then dragged the boy across the road, pointing excitedly in the direction of Barcelona.

"I have been praying for something to stop you, and look at that! My

friend, I believe there has been no such storm from the south in years! Here we stand in the sunlight, Téodor, while God's hand is visited upon the city! *Mi Dios*, but Teresa will be drowned this evening!"

From above them, great tufts of white cotton cloud freckled with rapid-running blots the tall cone of Terassa's green hill and its terraces of vineyards, the poppy fields below, wherein the padre's little boys were crossly at work, and the wide sweep of the burning yellow *vega*. Out of the mysterious south came a swift, dusty wind, as if hot-foot from Africa, while far off, where the gay city lay hidden by the round pink hills, a dark sheet of slate color grew higher and higher across the sky, shimmeringly striped with gold and silver sun rays.

Theodore's eyes, as he gazed, with the priest, at the strange panorama, were preoccupied and troubled; but the gravity left them without warning, and he laughed as impulsively as the priest had first laughed at him.

"So you believe, *padre mio*, that Heaven has drenched a whole cityful of unlucky people because you prayed to it to keep one man high and dry in Terassa! Do you believe, also, that to help your scheme the storm will generate the lady, and blow her straight into Terassa, like the famous straw into the log?"

"Though I do not venture to believe it," answered Padre Pedro, "I shall pray for it. Any lady—any short of a demon—would fly from a storm like that! But, Tédi, if my prayer *should* be answered, and she should be—a Spaniard—"

A throb of tender anxiety had crept through the banter of the elderly father's tone.

"Then," said Theodore promptly, "she must be the most Spanish Spaniard of the pack—the darkest, the blackest-haired, the angriest, the—deep-

est trickstress! If a Spaniard is the woman, she must be it all. That's me."

"Then you stay for a little, Téodor?" cried the priest, his eyes alight. "You stay, anyway, till—*mañana*?"

"*Mañana*? Not without laughing, padre," said Theodore.

"I thank God!" exclaimed Padre Pedro. "Yes, I thank Him for it, Téodor! And so will they, my dear friend; so will they!"

He had caught sight of Simpatica approaching them along the Chasm Road, with two of her little green birds upon her shoulders, and Tito twined inexplicably about her person like a papoose in a side pocket.

"Simpatica," he cried, "I had bad news for you five minutes ago. Now I have good news! Here is a man who was running from Terassa, for fear of marrying a Spanish wife!"

"And he does not go? *Gracias a Dios!*" shouted Tito, and he unwound and rewound himself, like the string of a top, from Simpatica to Theodore.

"He threatened it, padre," said Simpatica quietly, "but I did not argue. I knew he never would go without telling you, and I knew you would dissuade him."

Tito had dropped from Theodore to the road, and was sitting there in the dust again, looking thoughtfully from the young man to Simpatica.

"Excuse me," he said suddenly, struggling to his feet. "Excuse me, Tédi, but if you will allow such a young man as myself to make a suggestion, why do you not marry Simpatica? You are from the same circus, for one thing. And she is not Spanish. She is French and Italian—the same as vermuths, Tédi!"

Tédi shook his head dubiously.

"Two wrongs do not make a right, Tito," he said sadly.

"But," cried the padre, "you are to go into partnership with him, none the

Ainslee's

Simpatica—unchivalrous as he is help me with my people."

"Thus!" said Theodore, and he led her to his shoulder in a breathless rush—that sent her little love birds flying away with two diminutive morsels of jealousy. "Till the vacation season is over, Simpatica, you are to amuse the old, the young, the middle-aged as well! Rosa, padre, yours truly—that is English for speaker, father—but she smiles on the above parrot woman, who knows how to put soft soap on her—English, for the quiet piano pedal. *Mi* but Rosa plays Mexico on that! And I will undertake Gil and guerrillas."

"Put me down, Tédi!" begged Simpatica. "Did I nurse you back to health to have the iron mark of finery on my arm? I will help the padre if I can, but I will do it without you, as you put me down."

"Thank you both!" cried the padre absently. "Put her down, Tédi. Save the tricks for——"

"The trickstress?" demanded Theodore. "The townsfolk!" pleaded the padre. "Let her go!"

"No, then!" he cried, and whirled her round the back of his head to his shoulder.

"Theodore!" she protested, striving earnestly to make her gentle voice reach him. "*Theodorè!*"

Though she was the two sinful things had mentioned—French and Italian—she was the one person in Terassa who could pronounce the American's name; and, at the unaccustomed cadence of the sound, he slipped silently down into Tito's Buddha niche in the dust. She stepped lightly from him, and her two little love birds darted indignantly back to her.

"Padre," she said, "I will try Rosa, I think I can vouch for her—

though she has taken lately to calling me a foreigner, too, just as she does Tédi, because I told her the piano was keeping you awake. But let me tell you, I fear most of Terassa is tired of my little birds."

"And of my doing Kris Kringle in the summer," added Theodore. "German, padre, for chimney sweeping."

"Indeed, indeed, Terassa would be more ungrateful than I can believe," exclaimed the padre, "if they did not enjoy it as much as a festival!"

A wild, warm snatch of wind threw open the door of his house with a wrench and a clatter.

"Go in!" he cried. "Look, look, the storm is nearly here!"

"And the lady? Do you see her yet?" asked Theodore.

When his two foreign friends and his favorite small orphan had disappeared into the house, the padre stopped alone for a moment in the gusty road.

"My Father," he prayed, "may it please Thee that my extraordinary young American shall fall in love, and soon, and with some good woman. And, for the pleasure of a fond old man, my Father, may it please Thee that she be a good *Spanish* woman!"

CHAPTER III.

"Yes, I am Bianca, señor, who sells white flowers only."

Against all the gorgeous booths in the flower market, this simple one seemed to stand forth as if it deliberately used them for a background. In the cool shadow of a huge, snake-skinned sycamore tree, the wire rack held up a pure luxuriance of white roses, white violets, white irises, lilies, gardenias, camellias.

Save for the green of the leaves and the yellow of the day, there were but two bits of color in the booth—her eyes, which were as blue as cornflowers. Her hair was black. Her

dress was white. Her face as purely pale as the petals she was selling.

"Yes, I am Bianca, señor, who sells white flowers only."

The big city was a-swarm with people. It was Monday, near the noon hour. There had been a great bullfight yesterday. The king was in town. He was said to have come straight across country in a careening motor, from San Sebastian. He had dared Barcelona with his usual smile, and not a bomb had been thrown at him. He and country folk and foreigners had stayed over. The shops were giddy. The sun was got up in orange color for the hot equinox of September. From the head of the ramblas down through three of them—the favorite three, "Of the Studios," "Of the Birds," "Of the Flowers"—the eddying river of people served to confound the confusion of noise—the shriek and rattle of passing cars and carriages, the chirrup and song and whirl of the bird market, the laughter and banter of the market of the flowers.

"White flowers? Indeed, what but? I am Bianca, señor, who sells white flowers only."

Her stand was at the very end of the Rambla of the Flowers, exposed to the cobblestoned gap leading to the Rambla of the Sparrows, yet she could not be seen twenty feet away. Her picture had been in the newspaper yesterday, important as any bullfighter's, and the staring crowd around her stand was dense. It would gape, waver, shift, vanish—leaving her discernible half the rambla off—then grow again, like a hydra. It parted for a woman to reach the stand.

"Yes, señora. Indeed, I have to admit it, white violets are expensive. But I will tell you something—the roses are cheaper. The violets?" She brushed them with her lips in handing them.

"Buttonhole of violets, señor? Two reales. Gracias, señor."

"But you have not kissed them! Do you kiss them only for the señoras, beautiful Bianca?"

She peered across his shoulder at the edge of the crowd.

"Did some one else ask for Bianca, who sells white flowers only?"

Next to the white-flower girl's was the business of an aged, coal-eyed little woman, who likewise had a booth that was exclusive; though they were rakish and promiscuous in colors, she sold only potted plants.

"Well, well, Bianca," she piped, in a voice like honey in a lemon squeezer, "you do, indeed, a merry trade to-day!"

Bianca's silvery voice rang back directly.

"Indeed, a merry trade, and I am merry! God made me, Juana, and I am alive, and I am glad! With my trade but halfway thus all day, I can have a new white dress to-morrow! *White flowers, señora?* Heaven be with you, Juana! Did you ever see such sunlight?"

Juana peered up from among her wrinkles at the heaven the girl had conjured.

"Much can happen in the course of a day," she called; and her squint and her voice were ominous as a seer's.

"Yes, yes, I admit it, Juana!" cried Bianca. "It is my own saying that life changes every half hour. But for this one, I am happy! White flowers, señor? Do you see any other? I am Bianca, señor, who sells them only."

Overhead, the mingling branches of the sycamore trees, whose enormous mottled trunks stood in soldierly rows along both sides of the hard-trodden yellow way, made a cool, arching tunnel for the festive markets. Downward toward the Mediterranean, for a hundred paces, the multicolored stalls of the other flower girls formed little vortices not only of rainbow tints and heavy perfumes, but of staccato noises, for they were talking about Bianca to

any one who would listen, and, when no one would listen, were talking as volubly to one another; and they were not chatting pleasantly. When they were breathless, they would listen—perforce, and with lips bitten.

"Yes, yes, señora; God blessing you for another woman customer, I am Bianca, who sells white flowers only."

"The trickstress! The *trickstress*!" cried Lola Bota to Jesusita Senz, and Lola Bota burst into tears among the purple and lavender violets and red roses and bright pink carnations and yellow daisies which she had arranged with all the delicacy of a funeral. "The sneak! The snipe! The snob! The haughty trull!"

"But look!" screamed Jesusita, from across the way. "The municipal guard is driving the crowd from her stand! God be thanked! They were blocking the rambla! The nasty wretch! *Ha!*" And Jesusita raised her voice so that it rang through the cleared space to the corner. "There, you! The municipal guard had to attend to you and your nuisance!" And intoxicate with her wit, the young lady whose pretty christening had done her so little good raised her tones higher still: "May they dog your steps through Spain—that municipal guard, and the *civil* guard! You shameless one, with one white dress, but two lovers, to your back!"

Bianca shivered, and the rich, fair blue of her big eyes turned as dark as lapis with pain, but she kept them unwaveringly on the face of the young officer of the guard who was leaning against her stand, and it was he who looked angrily toward Jesusita and the weeping Lola.

"Señorita," he said gently, "I cleared the crowd only because I had to. You have done no harm—and I admire your trick."

Jesusita swore, and Lola's sobs grew louder.

"She is ruining us! As I cannot now

afford to eat, I shall pull her hair for lunch!"

The young officer frowned at them and leaned nearer to Bianca.

"Shall I go tell those girls, there, to be quiet?"

"No, no!" cried Bianca quickly. "They would hate me doubly. This is the better way!" She snatched a peseta from her cup, and, with a deft fling, spun it through the air and felled it like a plummet into Lola's. The sobbing ceased, and, as the girls gasped, so did the officer.

"*Mi Dios*, what a throw, friend! Why, you could go on the stage with a trick like that, and make your fortune!"

"No, no!" cried Bianca again; and again she shivered. "Do not say that, señor. My white flowers are enough—all I desire is to make my bread."

"With those girls slinging mud at you?"

"But how can that hurt me, señor?"

"What they said did not hurt you? I saw you shiver."

"I confess it, señor. You see, the one white dress was true—I wash it at night and iron it in the morning. And the two lovers—I *hope* that they are true! Pardon the joke, señor. I *have* two lovers. But I swear to you, by the whiteness of my flowers, that both of them have asked to marry me!"

He laughed.

"And you cannot choose? And, while you wait, you sell flowers?"

Bianca started.

"You divine much, señor!"

Again he laughed.

"I have heard much, and wondered more. With your looks, and your clever booth to bring them out, you have become, in a month, the most talked-of woman in the city. And your last trick—to get your photograph in the newspaper on the same page with the king's—*Mi Dios*, I take off my hat to you!" And he did so.

Her blue eyes gazed anxiously into his handsome bronzed face.

"Friend, friend—for you have just now seemed to be my friend—I swear to you the picture was an accident. It was but a snapshot of the rambla. I am no bigger than a beetle in it. And make me the favor not to tell me I am the most talked-of woman in the city! I am a poverty-pinched girl, señor. I have to sell my flowers. I have only my wits to live by."

"And your beauty—which your flowers trick out," he smiled.

In her eagerness she had caught, with trembling fingers, the hand in which he held his green-and-white-striped cap, and he now glanced humorously down along his gaudy sleeve.

"Poverty pinched," he inquired, "in spite of the young noblemen who are said to buy fortunes of white flowers at your booth for the sake of the white smile they get? Poverty pinched, when you throw a peseta to a woman because she has cursed you?"

She threw his hand from her as she had thrown the peseta, and he let it stay where it struck—over his heart—while he smiled across it.

Her voice was like hot silver:

"It is not true! If it is, I do not know it—I do not know *them*! These harsh girls say so! I would throw away many a peseta to keep them quiet! Shall a girl not earn her food at a stand in the street but she must throw her name in the gutter, too?"

Once more he smiled.

"Then why do you not marry one of your two true lovers?"

She gazed at him desperately.

"Señor, for that I have my own good reasons. Will you have them, in a few words? I think that to marry the one would be to bring fate upon myself, and I fear that to marry the other would be to bring fate upon that other. I must think, pray, before I marry either."

He leaned his elbow on the stand and fanned himself with his cap.

"Will you marry me, instead, white señorita?"

His voice was low, but at his languishing posture and the subtle dignity with which the beautiful, pallid girl drew herself to the full of her slender stature and faced him, a titter came from old Juana at the next booth, and, farther off, falsetto jeers fled up from Miss Jesusita, and still higher ones from Miss Lola Bota.

"Señor," said Bianca, "as I know that I deal with an officer of the law, I will not lie to you or banter with you. I will keep you my friend, if I can, as you started out to be, for I am very friendless. Yes, señor—if I believed you were in earnest, I believe I *would* marry you!"

"Alas, señorita," said the guard, "I am sorry, but I am a married man already!" And with a mocking bow and twitching lips, he strolled away.

Again a cackling titter came from Juana.

"So, Bianca, you have made a fine, round mistake in your tricks at last! You cannot fool an officer of the law!"

It was the noon hour, and the crowd had melted. All good Spaniards, which, in a country so mature as theirs, does not mean only rich ones, are given to the *siesta*, and this, as a custom, seems to attack even the busy city and permeate its streets. After the day's first rush of lifeblood through them, they seem suddenly to be asleep; and so it was now with the ramblas.

They were not deserted, but they were as soothingly quiet as a forest. Yonder, in the Rambla of the Sparrows, the reckless gossip of the million birds that nicknamed it sounded high among the leaves of the towering sycamores, like the half of an antiphonous choir answering its prettier, but unluckier, fellows caged in the bird market underneath. Jesusita and Miss Bota

had quit the Flower Rambla, to lunch upon Bianca's peseta, instead of upon her hair.

Bianca left her stand and walked over to the stall of her tittering old neighbor.

"Juana," she said, her voice trembling a little, "have you, too, turned against me?"

Juana's black eyes glittered and the laugh died out of them as she fixed them piercingly on the girl's white face and caught her wrists with clawlike fingers.

"You and your tricks have done me no harm, Bianca," she said. "I am like you in having a specialty, so you and your smart flowers have not interfered with me. But I do not trust you—I will tell you that flat. And I will tell you, too, that, leaving aside their jealousy, I do not wonder these girls talk against you. You have been kind to me, urged your own customers to buy my plants, shared your lunch with me. *But I do not think I would break bread with you again.* I gladly would with a poor wrong girl who could not help it, who made no pretenses. But I do not like your pious talk on top of your tricks.

"You know as well as I do that you are the loveliest flower girl in a city famous not only for the old beauty of its streets, but for the young beauties in them. And you know how you have called attention to that strange white beauty of yours with your pale, virginal flowers. And you know *better* than I do whether or not you are innocent of the rank and desires of some of your customers! All very well, if you had a husband to protect you. All very well, if you are preparing to go on the stage, as is said. But if neither, as you say, why play innocent? You know what you are doing! You deserve your name of trickstress! Though I have liked you, I had to own that just now, as you held the hand of that officer of

the guard, and tried, while you were doing it, to make him take you for an angel. It is quite as he said—if you are truthful, why do you not marry one of your true lovers?"

"Listen to me, Juana," said Bianca softly. Quiet as her voice was, there was a thrill of pleading earnestness in it. "I will tell you the truth, just as I told the officer the truth, because sneers frighten the truth out of me. It is because one of my lovers is a burly brute, whose love I would fear as much as I fear his hate; and because, Juana, if I married the other, I would be wearing my white veil in the red shadow of bloodshed. At least, I fear, I fear it!

"The big fellow is a coward, I admit, but a passionate one—a great giant from God knows where, a colossus, a juggler, a mountebank, black, huge like a bull in the arena, yet fascinating, Juana, like a snake. Such is Rodrigo. He threatens, towers, cringes, terrifies me! He wants to teach me tricks and put me in the theaters here in Barcelona—the Alcázar, the Nightshade, and that. I believe he loves me, but he loves living more. So would any man, you are thinking, but he is twice the size! He knows I could support him while he snored and drank. I loathe him, yet I fear him, fear him, fear him! He swears he will make me love him, and—he might, he might! He has a power that the *devil* gave him! God save me from him! Let me sell white flowers till I am older than you, Juana, only God save me from him!"

Juana's withered hands tightened on the delicate wrists, and the glittering black eyes searched the frightened blue ones.

"Right here, Bianca, is where I have believed you were a liar: If you truly can have but one white frock to your back, where is the little fortune you have made this month?"

"It—that—it is his hold over me,

Juana! He took it all, to put in the poor folks' bank for me."

Juana laughed contemptuously.

"Are you *simple*? Why could you not put it there yourself?"

"I—I was ashamed, Juana! So very much—for a poor girl! I can stand these women, but I dared not face the man at the grating in the bank."

"Baby!" cried Juana. "Do you believe your bully put it there?"

"No!" shivered Bianca. "I—I believe he spent it in stage dresses for me, Juana. Gaspar accuses him of it, and I fear it!"

Juana's clutch on the slight wrists grew still tighter.

"And this other—Gaspar—the lover that you love?"

"He is a laborer. I—I do not *know* that I love him. I—I have given my word that I will marry him. Yet I am afraid to! I might bring death upon him—Rodrigo threatens it if I keep my word. And I have dreamed that I would be Gaspar's death. And do I love him? I think so. But love is *strength*, Juana, is it not? And so, if I loved him sufficiently, would I be afraid? Would I have warnings in my dreams to bid him go—to bid it for my own sake as well as for his? I am afraid of *both* marriages, Juana—of the lover in the one case, of my marriage in the other! I fear, I fear!"

Juana relaxed her grip and patted the cool hands good-humoredly.

"Then, girl, pitch them both out of your mind and take the next that offers. Though I am haggish now, I have known something of this merchandise, the male, and third is best always. Take my word for that."

"But do you take mine?" cried Bianca. "Do you believe what I have told you? Do you believe that I am good, and want to be good? Will you kiss me? Will you break bread with me again?"

"Yes, I believe you, girl," said Juana

simply. "There, kiss me if you must. And go fetch your lunch over here, and I will eat it with you. I am no hypocrite, and I will tell you that I prefer your lunch."

"Ah," cried Bianca, "all is changed again! Life changes every half hour! What do I care now what they say? They saw you kiss me! I am not afraid of Rodrigo any longer! I shall marry Gaspar to-morrow—in a new white frock! And with white flowers only! God made me, and I am alive, and I am glad! Juana, Juana, look at the sunlight!"

The old woman gazed all about her, down at the yellow earth, across at the vistas of gilt-bathed houses, up at the blazing sky.

"Remember your own saying, girl—'Life changes every half hour.' It is the twenty-first of September, and it is not the kind of sunlight that I like."

CHAPTER IV.

Bit by bit, in a trio of musicians, a strolling sight-seer, a group of shoppers, a body of laborers wandering back to work, the drowse of the siesta lifted from the ramblas. Again they were awake, they were alive, they seethed—slowly, thickly. Again Bianca was invisible; again her silvery voice rang from behind a curtain of inquisitive heads:

"Yes—who sells white flowers only."

It was the picture of the morning, but in a different light; something more than the angle of the sun sombered the gay colors of the market. Through the wall of populace blocking the way to her stall an object pushed its path—a sickly article of wood and flesh. It was the upper half of a lottery-ticket vender, fastened to a small plank on four small wheels. The poor creature, with bright black eyes a-sparkle, was shoving himself hopefully toward the suddenly famous beauty, who, lucky

with loveliness and thus emergent from his own poor class, was making, so much money.

"Buy one of my *duodecimos*! Buy two of my *duodecimos*, fair white señorita!"

"Alas, hombre," cried Bianca, "life is lottery enough for me!"

"You grow rich by the hour, lily-white señorita! If you did not, you would call me señor, not hombre! Besides, you have legs to make you richer still, while look at me! Buy *three* of my *duodecimos*, rose-white señorita!"

"Indeed, I cannot afford it, amigo. Here, take this!" And she threw him a half peseta.

His glittering black eyes flashed, blindly, straight into hers.

"May lightning strike you! *Psst!*" And he hurled the coin viciously into his cup with his right hand and wheeled himself furiously away from her with his left.

"*Dios! Dios!* Such is poverty!" she breathed. "Yes, señor, I am Bianca. All these are my white flowers."

"Do you notice, Bianca, that that is the second time you have been cursed to-day?"

It was Juana's voice. Bianca did not answer. A swift, brief gust of hot wind had brought a flutter of big planeta leaves down upon her stand and she had sprung to catch a vase of white irises that had tottered. When she turned again, the crowd was parting deferentially for the passage of a new customer, and, with the rich, snowy lilies in her hands, Bianca curtsied.

It was a stately, dominating figure, clothed in black—a lady, elderly, beautiful, imperious. Her carriage waited for her at the corner.

"So you, it seems," she said, "would be Bianca, the famous flower girl?"

"Who sells white flowers only. Yes, Doña Señora!"

"Give me violets, girl." And the

lady placed a bank note and a penny on the stand.

With a little gasp, Bianca reached down her heaviest bouquet of pure-white violets, and held the mass of creamy blossoms forth. But her patroness did not take them.

With an effort, Bianca choked back a second gasp. She had brushed the flowers daintily with her lips, and the great lady had shivered and drawn away.

"These are fresher, perhaps, señora?" Dropping the great bouquet, Bianca had turned like a flash and swept together her three remaining bunches.

"Thanks, girl. These are decidedly better! Girl, you have admitted to me, without a blush in your pale, handsome cheeks, that you are famous. Let an old woman tell you something—from famous to infamous is but one step *up* the ladder of life for your class, my girl. Beware of aspiration!"

Though she felt herself trembling from her shoulders to her feet, Bianca's lovely head remained poised like one in marble, and her blue eyes did not waver.

"Is heaven infamous, señora? I aspire to that."

At the first note of colloquy, the crowd had drawn respectfully off, and the two curiously beautiful women were alone together in a little cubicle of humanity.

"Girl," said the old aristocrat, in a low, terrible voice, "you may dare Heaven in your tricky speech. But *this* world, when you dare it, is merciless to your sort! I have taken a kind trouble to warn you of it, girl!"

"My sort?" repeated Bianca. Her voice was as quiet as the aristocrat's, but there was a vibrance in it that matched the light playing in her steady eyes. "Señora, I do not permit myself the passion of anger, for I am poor, and anger is expense—double expense from poor to rich, from low to high—

and you are a rich patrician. But let me tell you that if I were rich and noble, there would be passion in what I tell you now—that, for all its tricks and for all the original sin God put in it, *my* soul, in *your* meaning, beautiful, pure señora, is as white as my flowers, as white as the face that your words have made whiter!"

Her stately aggressor shrank away a little.

"My girl, my girl, do you know to whom you speak?"

"I do not," exclaimed Bianca, "except that you are a lady of station who boasts of wisdom, and who, therefore, should know honesty when she meets it, even in the street!"

"You are bold, girl!" cried the old lady passionately. "You are impudent! I would be sorry I spoke to you, but that I did God's bidding as I understood it! Go you with God—I will pray for it!" And, placing the white violets back upon the stall, she swept to her carriage. Gaping, the crowd closed in again.

"Violets? White violets?" cried Bianca, her silvery voice high and strange. "Catch, catch!"

And she loosened the bunches and hurled the flowers far from the booth, among the crowd. As it scattered, laughing and scrambling, she ran, trembling, to Juana.

But Juana motioned her away with a hateful gesture.

"No, no; do not speak to me again, Bianca! I can read you now, the soul you bragged about and all! I rage to think how you tricked me into kissing you, to show the market you had a respectable friend!"

"Juana! Juana!" cried Bianca. "Why did the old *doña* speak to me so? Why, Juana, why?"

"Do you not know who she is?" squealed Juana jubilantly. "She is the Marquesa del Aragón, and I believe you know it just as well as I do. It is some

relative of hers that you have been inveigling. So, Bianca, do not speak to me again!"

"It is not true!" breathed Bianca.

"It is true! It is true!" squeaked Juana. "There is more fire in this smoke of gossip than I thought at first! *White* fire, Bianca! Ha! ha! he-e-e-e! ha! ha! Jesusita and Lola, when they went to spend your peseta for their lunch, saw a handsome young man go into the house where you live."

"There are twenty families in the house where I live!" gasped Bianca.

"Do not speak to me again, Bianca," tittered Juana.

Dazed and dark-eyed with pain, Bianca trembled back to her deserted flower stand. It was deserted, truly—there was no crowd near it. People seemed to be leaving the ramblas hurriedly—as if she were a pariah. Yes, yes; in all directions they were leaving! Her imaginative thought horrified her.

"Am I the white plague?" she cried. "*May they dog your steps through Spain—the municipal guard and the civil guard! May lightning strike you! You may dare Heaven, but this world, when you dare it, is merciless to your sort!*" God, God, where is Your harbor for the poor of Spain? Are they mine own people who have cursed me three times to-day? Then, God and Mother of Heaven, I beseech you, deliver me from Spaniards!"

As she stood, white-faced, before her curtain of white flowers, and stared, wide-eyed, ahead of her, all of the sunlight seemed to have gone out of the ramblas—out of life. And suddenly she realized that out of the ramblas it had quite literally gone. A pall of slate gray had risen over the city.

Her last words—of such terrible and such instinctive prayer—had been unconsciously a physical cry. She had not heard herself call aloud, but she heard Juana now:

"Did you hear that, Jesusita? The brazen trickstress curses her own nation!"

"Lola, Lola, do you hear that? What shall we do to her?" screamed Jesusita.

The girl and her flowers were marked in sharp white silhouette against the tangible murk. Its smother seemed to make the city breathless. A bit of glinting silver curveted across the green and brown of the trees and rattled at her feet—the harsh, empty opposite of the money she had flung. Lola had poured the coins from her cup and flung it at her.

"Take that! Throw something at her, Jesusita!"

"Jesus, Jesus, I am terrified!" Bianca whispered.

But as her lips moved with the simple words, her thoughts were racing, and she started as her instantly upraised eyes caught the fierce blackness of the heavens.

"Friends! Friends! Have you not seen? *God help us all!*"

A small army of frightened feminine cries fled panic-stricken through the air, and the sounds were torn and scattered and tossed by a rush of wind that wrenched and mixed with them a myriad leaves from the twisting, whistling trees.

There was a mutter; there was a rumble; there was a crash.

The chained trinity sounded like a warning of world's end through the city air. Gray deluge, as if the crowding houses of the town were lonely arks of old, suffused the streets and lashed the populace, that ran desperately for shelter.

Mutter! Rumble! Crash!

It was a summer storm, a Mediterranean southern storm, so sudden, so terrific, that the great sycamore leaves fell now in tens of thousands to the dirt and cobbles; so swift, so accurate, that the entire market of the birds was wrecked while yet the market of the

flowers stood intact, unwet. For it came from the south and west, sweeping home to the Mediterranean eastward through the ramblas, and many a parrakeet was drowned in his wire cage, and scores of dainty yellow canary corpses turned little shriveled toes toward heaven in their stacks of small wooden homes, before they were conveyed from the market to near-by hospitality in the shops.

Mutter! Rumble! Crash!

In three swift seconds, the Rambla of the Flowers now had earned its title in an extravagant interpretation of itself that would have satisfied the stormy eye of Nero or the delicate tread of the lovely Queen of Sheba. Roses and Spanish hyacinths, roses of all rose colors, violets and irises and roses, more roses and roses again, in hundreds and hundreds garnished the long street under the wind-tossed trees.

Flare!

Down through the whirl of leaves and yellow dust and the vast blown curtains of seething rain, a great lightning sheet swept the place and lit with pure, flashing silver the beautiful flowerstrewn way, while the cruel, hissing flood and the terrified trampling feet crushed a volume of perfumes from the white and pink and violet and red and yellow.

Flare! Crash! And a scream—long drawn and frightful among the countless screams of terror and of poverty grown more poor.

Bianca, her pale face now as colorless as her name itself, and as pure in the beauty of its horror, too—a slender, flowerlike figure in a whirlpool of shrieking wind and swirling leaves—had been standing, poised and hesitant, staring piteously at her fallen stall and its mound of overturned white blossoms, helpless to pick up her scattered wealth of coins, helpless to cease gazing at the ruin of her pretty little fortune.

Then there had been, again, that mut-

ter, that rumble, that crash—and a Titan flare; and with that long, frenzied cry of mortal fright, Bianca leaped past the giant sycamore as the blinding white sheet smote it and rent it from its great cleft to its roots.

As she ran, she looked back madly over her shoulder, once—as a repetition of the wild silver flare twitched to the horrible music of another, a groaning, a deathly, a splitting crash, the life cry of the vast tree as it gave up the ghost and dropped like doomsday down the rambla. Its top twigs tore her skirt as she leaped from the curb. With a sob, she dashed into the Calle San Pablo.

"No, no; with all the troubles He has lately put upon me, and having just taken all my flowers and food away, the good God would not think to murder me!"

The whole city seemed dark to her after the ghastly light. The silver of it seemed to have entered her brain, imprinting itself to stay, dancing with tiny colors upon her mind, her very soul. But she ran swiftly, precisely, never stopping. She had had so to run, sometimes, late at night. Block after more and more deserted block, she rushed unerringly toward home. A plaguing voice seemed to be whispering in her ears: "Would you speak so thankfully of the good God, Bianca, if you knew into what new torment you were running?" But her terror was subsiding gradually, and she laughed her answer as she ran, in childlike bravery, her light young voice striking like a snatch of silver music through the hiss of the undiminishing rain:

"God made me, and I am alive, and I am glad!"

CHAPTER V.

In a small room, poor, bare, square, of four white plaster walls, and, therefore stark—and yet dark, for the approaching storm already held a leaden

quadrangle to the window space—a young man was pacing, his strides quick, impatient. Now and again this sole occupant of the meager little home would throw himself nervously down upon its rickety sole chair and stare pre-occupiedly before him as if he would never stir again—albeit the cheap place was neatly ordered, with its cheap accouterments, and displayed a vaseful of white flowers, and should, by these signs, have been a woman's room.

His slim, tall figure was in the blue and corduroy of a laborer. His head and features were noble in both outline and color—dark like the room, aquiline.

Mutter! Rumble! Crash!

He sprang up and stood listening. But as the ominous threat of nature died away, he stayed motionless, listening still. It was not the thunder that had wrenched him from the chair. He had expected the storm. The tune to which his ears were vibrating was the far-off creaking of time-eaten stairs.

Nearer, nearer, near; up, up, flight upon flight, toward the aerie lodging of the girl who sold white flowers only, came a tread so heavy, steady, powerful, that it would have meant juggernaut to any path of flowers.

The eyes of the listener narrowed; his handsome, thin lips pressed threateningly together.

As the dominating tread surmounted the topmost stair and turned through the corner of the little hall, he stepped forward, and was standing erect, tense, with folded arms, savagely facing the door when it swung open and reclosed, forming the paneled background of a strange portrait of humankind—a background for the newcomer, all save the top of his head, which reached to the plaster above the painted woodwork.

A fresh mutter of thunder coincided with the picture's entrance. He might have been the precursor, the offspring, the minstrel, of the coming storm. His

great body was less fat than monstrous, though a statue of suave curves that was saved from the ludicrous only by its phenomenal height. His head and face were round; yet, with the aid of their smoothly mingling rouge and olive, nearly beautiful—so exact were their proportions in relation to both figure and feature. His eyes were silver. Some peculiarity of refraction or of spirit shot this color upon their undertone of fierce brown black, and until he died and the light went out of them, no one would ever know what color they basically were. His lips of rich red were thick. His hair, shining with natural oil, yet crisply curling, was inky black. He wore a profligate, bemixed mass of garments. He was gray corduroy of trouser, red of shirt, English of cravat—for he topped his laborer's costume with an affected flowing tie of wide black silk, like a little boy's; and he wore apropos, possibly, of his aggressive physique—a bull-fighter's giddy jacket, gold and purple; while, at the extreme northeast of his round, curly-haired head he had perched an absurd, round, red little childlike cap, with a bright little bell hanging down from it. He was not young. He was a creature of thirty.

From cap to boots, his was a presentment so rare that one observing him thus would have marveled that he was not a figure in the city. Yet he was not. In his movable ways, he was as successfully indistinguishable from his fellows as an unclean bat whirling among clean ones. Not a sound had noted his flitting into the house where the flower girl lived; a dozen girls and men had marked the coming of the simpler man.

Between the two gazing men, there was first silence, then the rumbling mutter of growing thunder.

"So!" The first word burst from Gaspar, who had not the big fellow's terrifying calm.

"So!" The second word was low, guttural, smooth, a thing of a company of contradictory adjectives. For the subtle ear, Rodrigo's soft, harsh voice had a certain outrageous music.

"There is but one chair in her room," said Gaspar slowly and between his teeth, "and I shall occupy it." And, turning his back on the giant, he re-seated himself.

Quietly smiling, Rodrigo, his big tread now as deliberately noiseless as a panther's, stepped by him, sat down on the girl's little white bed, and propped himself negligently, insinuatingly, against the pillow. So seated, they were face to face again. A raging red swept into Gaspar's cheeks.

"I cannot put you out!" he cried. "God arranged that when He built your bones and hide! But *she* will, when *she* comes! We have had no three-cornered talk as yet! I am glad that this pretty meeting has come up. A poor girl's two suitors, one loving her, one who would rejoice in her as his slave, seek out her lodging to await her, each to complain of the other, each to force her hand!"

"To force her hand—yes; not to complain, I!" smiled Rodrigo. "I have come to *warn*! What have I to complain of? She has fancied you, young Gaspar, I grant you that. But marry you? She knows me. She would not dare. And she does *not* know you—there lies a score on my side. Who does? You paltry laborer, with lofty airs, where do you work, what do you earn, what have you to offer her? Do you think she would not ask you before she went to church? But she will not go, before or afterward."

Gaspar sprang to his feet, his fists clenched, his breath gasping, his handsome face gray with passion.

"I have called you too big a brute, you would-be bandit, for me to hurl out bodily! So I will have to let you sit there till she comes. But she will

tell you then what I have told you—that she is to marry me within the week! If you ever got a concession out of her, it is a compromise that you frightened from her with your big, towering carcass—as you did her money, as if you were married to her already, and for a proprietor's purpose! In the name of love, you bully and pester her because her face has grown famous at her white-flower stand, and you think that by adding your trumpery tricks to her beauty, you can get food and wine and bodily comfort from her sweat on the stage! Well, she loves *me*, and there is your final answer!"

"My final answer," said the burly giant, both glowering and grinning upon his young enemy from his seat on the edge of the bed, "is that *I* love *her*. And if you have to pay for our marriage with your life, that marriage shall take place."

Gaspar laughed.

"*She* may fear you, but *I* am not afraid! I would be a fool to try my strength against you. But bullies are afraid to kill, my friend, and there, I tell you, the simple girl knows as much as I do! Once married to me, she will never have one moment's fear of you again!"

From his lolling posture, whence he had gazed up with his maddening smile into Gaspar's glaring eyes, Rodrigo slowly heaved himself to his feet.

Once more the thunder muttered. There had been none of it while Gaspar had spoken. It was as if the giant called the storm to ink his words. It grew sinisterly louder, louder, as he spoke, like a crescendoing orchestra for his devilish voice.

"You clean-clothed, dirty jobster, you opener of oysters, you sweeper of floors, you *puntillero* or *whatever* you are, the reason I do not lift you from the room and carry you, like a baby, down the stairs and sit you in the

weather is because you would stop there, whimpering in the doorway, to intercept her and persuade her, with your salt water, to scamper off with you out of my neighborhood! Little one, learn to fear me! I tell you, I would kill you but for the nuisance of the girl's yells! For know you, *hombre*, the garrote would take no trouble for your kind!"

A choking cry wrenched from Gaspar, and words followed it pell-mell from his quivering throat:

"You looming coward, *fear* you? Learn now how much! *Puntillero*? Oyster opener? Sweeper of floors? He will have a gift for his beauty when she comes—the broken spell of her woman's terror of you, the news that he has *cuffed* you!" And, with the strength of an oysterman, he brought his slender hand across the giant's face.

The small, sickly sound was lost in a shriek of nature—in roar, crash, downpour. The storm had reached the poor quarter and was raging at the window, battering the roof.

Across the window's quivering silver square a great uplifted arm, a huge fist, were marked in black. Then came darkness. In another searing shudder of light, the vaseful of white flowers tottered and fell to the floor. There was darkness again.

"Get up!" said Rodrigo gruffly. He fumbled about for a candle. "Get up!" he said again, and he prodded his helpless enemy with his foot. "*Get up!* Are you a weakling or—a trickster? You fool, you need not try to frighten me!"

He had lit the candle, and, at sight of his own big hand in the light of it, he sat down limply on the edge of the bed with a little whimper:

"There, I have gone and hurt myself on you! Oh, oh! Why does not Bianca come and do up my poor hand? *Get up*, I tell you!"

Again he shoved the fallen youngster

with his toe. The movement altered the position of the handsome head and brought it into the radius of the candle-light. Rodrigo caught his breath as he saw the temple.

With clicking teeth, and the candle shaking in his hand and distorting the flame, he rose, stepped across the body, softly opened the door, peered into the black hallway, stood listening. He could hear voices filtering, muffled, from other lodgings in the house, but there was no vibration of approaching footsteps.

He came swiftly back, stepped over the body again that he might command the door across it, knelt beside it, filched its money.

At the amount of it—silver, bank notes, some gold—the fear for a moment left his eyes to let avarice joyfully in. There was enough to take him countless kilometers from the garrote. Even if he met his sweetheart in the hallway, he might still be safe. He might crouch in the shadow, unseen, as she passed him by. And, by the mercy of a kind Heaven, the timid young thing might be accused of pounding the man to death. He started to rise, but his hand struck the dead boy's shirt. There was something there.

It was a leather wallet. With trembling fingers he drew out its contents—a few papers, a card. He had set the candle on the window sill, and thus high, and with steady glow, it fairly lit the entire little room. As he gazed at the graven words upon the card, the giant sank back on his haunches between the body and the bed, his olive face white as the flowers scattered on the corpse and on the floor, his great, grotesque person shaking and horrible as a sea-monster shrinking from a harpoon.

"*Jesus and Mother of Jesus!*" he breathed. "*The Marqués del Aragón!*"

He crammed the card and the papers into the wallet, the wallet into his shirt.

The garrote would reach through many kilometers for a man like that! Three seconds, and he could be in the darkness of the stairway. But a swift noise sent a knife of fright into him and pinned him there, crouched, speechless, red-handed, staring, immovable. The door had opened. Bianca was standing in the room.

Save for the dripping, dripping of her saturated frock, she, too, was motionless. Her mouth was open. Her face seemed frozen with horror. Shining out of its wet pallor, her wide blue eyes looked enormous. Their ghastly stare was straight across the room, across the flower-decked body, straight into the murderer's.

And those silver ones, gazing back, were now not only a murderer's—they were murderous. He had killed without intent. His instinct now was to kill deliberately. The lightning of his thought could point no other way. She had closed the door behind her, paneling her terrible loveliness as he had lately done his own strange picture. With one spring, unheard, he could be upon her, neatly silence her.

But life had destined Bianca to speak again. Her hyacinth eyes had not wavered. It had seemed to him, through the centurylike moment of her stare, that she was reading her death sentence in his face without surprise or fright, as a soul already lost might look without quivering upon some new torture.

"Who is here?" she demanded, her voice strained and queer. "Who is in my room? Is it you, Gaspar?"

As he gazed on, helpless with wonder at her wild, drenched beauty, his brain flashed with the thought that the sight of her dead lover, in one fell instant killed, flower-strewn and candlelit, had driven her mad; and a hoarse breath of confused astonishment came from him.

"Oh, oh! It is Rodrigo!" she cried;

and with each syllable her voice rose so that her last words were a thin wail of misery. "Come here and touch me, Rodrigo! Fetch me across the room! Rodrigo, God has stricken me with the lightning! Rodrigo, Rodrigo, I am blind, stone-blind!"

CHAPTER VI.

Slowly the big creature rose to his full stature, a long, stertorous breath escaping him. He was trembling pitifully—more violently than before, but it was with a rush of dazing hope. He did not speak. He dared not as yet trust his voice.

"Rodrigo," she cried sharply, "where are you? Why do you not speak to me?"

It forced words from him. They were husky, soft.

"Poor little Bianca! Poor little child! I was struck dumb by your telling me you had been struck blind! Poor, poor little Bianca!"

He stepped across the body and swept her up in his arms with desperate eagerness—easily, tenderly, too, as a mother lifts her baby, as he had threatened to lift the marqués.

"There, I will bring you to the bed, Bianca!"

"Rodrigo, Rodrigo, you are trembling all over your great body! Do you, then, care so much that I am blind?" Her voice choked pitifully. "Are you so sorry for me?"

Fondling her, pressing her to him, he stepped back across the body. At his caress, as he carried her over their terrible companion, she clung to him madly. Tears had come at last to the beautiful, desperate eyes. She would not let him lay her on the cot. Sobbing, she fastened her arms about him, and he sat with her, trembling anew as he clasped her shuddering, wet form against his heart, and, with one huge,

soft hand, held back her little feet from touching the body.

"Rodrigo!" she again moaned. "Rodrigo! The good God has afflicted me even beyond the affliction of death! Why should He not have let it strike me dead? Parentless, helpless, poverty-stricken! *Sin sol, sin sol* forever till I die! Dear God, Rodrigo, neither Gaspar nor you will want to marry me now!" And her voice rose to a wail again as she clung to him.

"There, there, poor little Bianca!" he said, patting her. There was a deep furrow in his smooth, thick brow. His heavy eyelids were blinking, the silver eyes flashing from under them in the rushing chaos of his thoughts.

"Rodrigo," she implored, "will you now marry me if Gaspar will not? Ah, ah, I *know* he will not! Would he, Rodrigo, would he?"

"No, indeed—no, he will never marry you now, Bianca!" cried the giant, with a roar of queer laughter; and, as she sobbed aloud once more, he added swiftly: "There, there, he would not have anyhow, Bianca. I tell you I know that. Did I not tell you so from the beginning? Fate has given you to me, after all, Bianca. Is it not so?"

"Yes, yes, if you will marry me, Rodrigo! But will you?" she cried. "Will you? Are you willing to? Think of me, sightless, helpless, a Bianca without sunlight! Yes, you have been right, Rodrigo! I believe you now! I believe that you are good, I believe that you have loved me! Can you still, Rodrigo? Gaspar would not, now I am blind. I feel sure of that. And I do not fear you any longer, Rodrigo! God, God, what strength is! It has been my own saying: Love is strength! Feeling your strength holding me, close, safe in my darkness, I do not fear you and never will again—if—if, indeed, you *will* marry me, Rodrigo! Will you so *prove* your love? Will you care for me, protect me in the blackness?"

"Yes, yes!" said Rodrigo.

"And marry me, Rodrigo? You will marry me?"

"Come, come," he said, "it is no time to talk of marriage now. Poor little Bianca! I will take care of you, take you away with me, protect you."

"Then, Rodrigo, take me away quickly!" she implored. "Rodrigo, Gaspar was coming here to-day. And do you not feel him near us? Take me quickly; take me *now*, Rodrigo. I could not bear to have him see me. You know he is proud and spirited—he—he might *taunt* me! You have not taunted me, Rodrigo!"

"Yes—we must go quickly, and escape him," said Rodrigo, thanking God for the cards she placed in his hands, and placing her, in turn, hastily down upon the bed. "Lie there, Bianca. Do not move a muscle. I am your master now, and I command it. You must have a dry frock upon you. The storm has stopped. Where are your frocks, Bianca?"

She laughed weakly.

"I have no other. I was to have had a new white dress to-morrow. And my beautiful coins are rolling, with my eyes, in the mud of the ramblas!"

"But you have a cloak, Bianca?"

"An old coat, yes—a man's old coat, that I had for a peseta. In the dresser, there, Rodrigo."

Like a colossus straddling his fallen enemy, a toe in its armpit, a heel grazing its quiet cheek, the big, trembling fellow fumbled for the garment.

"Can you not find it, Rodrigo?" She rose from the bed and took a half step toward him.

"Lie down!" he roared, turning upon her with the voice and the words of a furious owner to his dog, and she threw herself back upon the cot with a little scream. He towered over her, with the dingy overcoat in his hands. "Did I command you to stay right there, or did

I not? Here, get up and stand motionless while I put this on you!"

She did as he bade her. Her breath came and went, in plaintive little flutters. Her tragic blue eyes stared desolately across Gaspar's body. Her little feet were almost touching its feet.

"Perhaps, Rodrigo," she trembled timidly, "it would be better to wait until Gaspar comes? Do you think that perhaps he would still marry me, Rodrigo? And—and you would not be troubled with me then?"

"Baby!" he cried, jerking the buttons in his irritation as he fastened them. "Are you blind in your brain as well as in your eyes? That oyster knifer was a vain young fool! Do you think he would marry a woman who could not gaze upon what he thought was his beauty? Stop crying, now! You are wet enough already! Do you think I kindly put this coat on you to be drenched indoors? Come!"

He lifted her over the man she wept for and stood her, like a puppet, by the door.

"Do not move, mind! I must put out the candle. Begin to train yourself, right now, to do what you are told. Because, a week from now, you must be catching coins that I toss from rods away. And you will never learn unless you learn not to budge."

He stepped back to the candle and plunged the room in darkness. Then, cautiously, he made his last journey over the silent visitor they were quitting.

"Take my hand and follow close to me, Bianca."

He threw open the door. She took the great hand, but hung back upon it for a pathetic instant in her black little home.

"I suppose Gaspar would not have! But—but you are going to marry me, Rodrigo?"

"Well, well, I will think it over," said Rodrigo. "Quietly, now, Bianca."

The door closed behind them.

"Quietly, Bianca, and close to the wall, in case he may be coming up the stairs. So! One flight! Quietly still, Bianca; quietly!"

CHAPTER VII.

High in the mountains, perched over the gloomy chasm that leads distantly through the foothills to Terrassa, there is a little, lonely house, standing bravely through the fierce weathers that sweep down from among the Pyrenees, and cheerfully playing the rôle of host to any gypsy lost from a caravan or to any other chance wayfarer. Almost every one knows of this; but, on the other hand, those who do not would scarcely credit the history of the storm-swept, desolate little refuge.

This rude house, about the size of four coffins up on end, is a delicate sea-shell pink in color, for it was long ago painted red, with berry juice, and afterward washed by rain and bleached by baking sunshine; and it is like a sea-shell in another respect, for any one putting his ear to it would find it alive with the humming roar of a waterfall. A few rods down the green slope from it—day and night, morning, noon, and afternoon, year after year—the spraying white-and-silver cataract pours, dauntless and inexhaustible as Fate herself, down to the bottom of the rugged chasm.

Some houses are so native to their surroundings, so appropriate to their scenery and their soil, that they seem to have been born instead of built. They seem to have purposes, to draw to themselves characteristic adventures, quite as if they were people. And this radical little house had made itself, for years, the home of Miguel, a voluntary outlaw from Terrassa because he had killed a man in a mix-up, without meaning to. It happened just afterward that Miguel was small Tito's

father and did not know it. And such are the tricks of destiny that Tito, when he was ten years old, and because he had stolen the magician's monkey at the wine festival, became a voluntary outlaw, too, and came, by chance, to stop with his father in the little house, where his character taught Miguel such a lesson in conscience that they both became lawful and went back home, to Terrassa.

Thus the house was rid of its accidentally murderous tenant. Yet, though it is all so difficult to believe of an innocent-looking, pink little house, now, after exactly one year's time, here it was harboring another man who had killed a man without meaning to!

This present one had laid his huge body north and south along the green slope that slanted down from the door, his head toward the house, his feet toward the waterfall—though from the opulence of his posture it might have been taken that he would as negligently have pitched himself the other way to. So luxurious was his person, and so steep the grass-covered incline, that even Bianca's delicate white hands might, with a little determination and daring, have shoved him into the wet and saved a lot of trouble. But the wide blue eyes, as she stood beside him listening to his orders, gazed down toward him as if, for all their vacant expression, they were doting on the mass of indolent carrion before her. Slothful as he was to-day and every day, he had proven himself a genius in some sort, for her beautiful head glinted in the sunlight like a goldfish in a globe of silver water.

The changes wrought in her exquisite face by sorrow and by the vacancy of her big staring eyes he had thus capped by dusting and dusting her raven-black hair with gold powder and, by dint of inspiration or queer learning, imposing the bright burnish there like a color on porcelain that has gone

through fire. To one who saw only the sumptuous, curling strands and the marblelike, immobile face, she might have been Midas' daughter. Nor did the strange unnature of this lessen, though it changed, her loveliness. It rendered her rare white beauty more exotic than ever, while old Juana, Miss Bota, Jesusita, would but with difficulty have recognized the famous flower girl.

"Come, now, Bianca," the giant said, with abrupt energy in his elocution, but none in a single muscle, "here it is getting on for sunset, and you have learned positively nothing new to-day!"

"Indeed, but I have, my Rodrigo!" she protested. "Did you not find me, when you waked at noon, sitting on the doorsill with a new toss of the little globes that I had learned all by myself since sunrise?"

"Well, well," he said, "you should not have been sitting down. Do you expect to sit down on the stage? Who ever heard of such a thing? So stop mooning there, until it is *time* for the moon! Go get the little globes, and do it again for me now!"

She climbed obediently to the little house and fetched back with her, tossing some of them as she came, seven gay little spheres, which shone prettily in the sunlight—red and yellow, violet, green and lavender, rose pink, and robin's-egg blue.

He gazed up at her performance languidly and without cursing, which indicated commendation.

"Rodrigo," she said, as her arms fell, at last, in sheer weariness, to her sides, "it is seven days we have been here—seven days with no voice to hear save each other's voices. Shall we not go to some village presently? Though I love you, Rodrigo, and that comforts me in my darkness, I feel strange—and from that my cleverness suffers, my Rodrigo!—when I think that it is seven days since I have heard a human voice!"

"Come, is my voice not human?" bel-lowed Rodrigo, starting up.

Her own voice, quick and silver, hastened out its answer:

"No, no; it is the voice of—of a god, Ro—Enrique!"

"There, that is right!" he said, subsiding. "I am glad you have thought at last of the 'Enrique.' I have been wondering when you would remember it. Though there is no cruelty in my whole fine, tall person, I was going to pinch you again soon, if you were not more careful. It was six days ago I told you we were to be Enrique and his blind-wife Doradilla, and that we were then and there to forget our former names and never once use either of them, either of us. And at nearly sundown, six days afterward, here you are doing it again, Bianca!"

"Indeed, I will not once more forget, Enrique mio."

"Well, then, go over there, behind the house, and we will practice it," he said. "Never, never again 'Rodrigo' or 'Bianca,' mind! Now, much depends upon the effect of the human voice, and yours is a quite pretty one, Bianca; a light, delicate contrast to the rich tones of mine. We must fascinate people as we approach the towns, before ever they see us, calling out our names. Now!"

She had disappeared behind the little pink house, and an eerie music began between them:

"En-ree-ee-ee-kay!"

"Dora-dee-ee-eel-ya!"

"I am Doradee-ee-eelya, poor blind Golden-head!"

"I am Enree-ee-kay, her gigantic husband!"

And both together, like a small pair of children:

"Come see our performance! Come out and see Enrique and Doradilla!"

Sighing, Doradilla walked softly from behind the house and, kneeling before it, fetched together a pile of

twigs under a kettle hung between two sticks near the door.

"Well!" cried the giant. "Are you just now doing that? Do you mean to say my supper is not ready?"

"It is not time, Enrique," she said wearily.

"How do you know it is not time, as you live in total darkness?"

"Because I can feel colors, Enrique. Have I not many times told you that?"

She went into the house, swept out a box of vestas from a mound of extraordinary chattels in the corner, stepped forth again, and lit the twigs. Then she came slowly, desolately, down to where he lay. Even for their drill in titles, he had not got up.

"Enrique," she pleaded, "be kind to me for a half hour! Life used to change every half hour! Will you not, Enrique?"

He sprang up and towered over her so that his great shadow, chased by the molten sunset, engulfed her as it fled down the slope to the waterfall.

"You are forever complaining, Doradilla! You are in *every* way no more the little Bianca that you were! How can you, when here am I taking care of you, having to lead you all about when I am not positively lifting you up and down, and all for the dog's reward of the hand-to-mouth living you will make for us? You are a monster of selfishness; that is what you are, Bianca!"

"No, no; I will make a lot for us, Enrique!" she exclaimed. "You have not listened to me even yet about the colors—how I feel them! It will be a fine trick, a noble trick, Enrique! Enrique, I can feel the beauty of this spot. You have never told me what the scene is like, but I know that it is beautiful. I have longed always to be thus high above the great Catalanian plain, and alas that, now I am, I cannot see it! Is it not beautiful, Enrique?"

"*Beautiful?*" he replied contemptuously. "Your golden poll is an empty one, Doradilla! How could scenery be beautiful? *Women* are beautiful. And flowers—I will admit that, if you put them on a woman; but it depends, even then, on the woman you put them on. And jewelry, for that, no matter what its crazy hues, means gold and silver. And clothes, sometimes—women's, when cut just right to set them out, or, in some special case, a man's, even. What a pity you cannot see mine, Bianca—so gay—my red shirt and braided purple jacket and my fine flowing tie! Just to think, I so dressed myself up on your account at great expense that day, and, because of your carelessness, staying out in a storm, you got yourself struck blind and I had all my trouble for nothing! Take my word for it, they are beautiful! But scenery?"

He gazed all about him at the panorama—at the shimmering pink ball of the sun sinking slowly through its sea of lavender clouds; at the sharp, tent-like peaks, white, gray, and violet, of the Pyrenees, endless in their multiplied circling; at the silver rush of the cataract into the green and brown of the chasm.

"You are silly, Golden-poll! There is not a thing in it that can equal my shirt! There is not one color you can put your finger on!"

The girl shivered a little.

"I thought that it was beautiful here, till you spoke," she said.

"Well, it is not," said Enrique.

"But it has colors, Enrique! I can feel them!" she cried. "Will you not try me, Enrique! Let me tell you if I am right, it will bring money to you. It will be jewels to you, meaning gold and silver. Try me, Enrique—turn me to the sun."

"Well, well!" he growled and turned her sharply to the west.

"It is pink!" she cried.

"Well," he admitted, "I suppose a poetic fool would call it pink."

"And to the cararact."

He faced her about.

"Silver, bright silver!"

The great giant bent double, his hands on his stomach, and guffawed with delight.

"No, no; the waterfall is *red*!" he shrieked.

"But, Enrique, Enrique, the meaning of it is I *felt* the silver—as I feel your silver eyes when you let me look into them, beloved!"

"And when I let you, you never hit it right," said Enrique. "You gape straight at my forehead."

She winced, but her words hastened on:

"And the great gush of silver goes down into gray and brown—bright, sunlit gray and brown and sharp moss green! Am I right, am I right, Enrique?"

"Yes, yes," he hesitated. "Though you might easily think it out."

He had straightened up. His voice was sober. The silver eyes that she had spoken of narrowed to two glinting slits as he watched her. He caught her shoulders and whirled her around and around dizzily, halting her with a jolt toward the north.

"You will never tell me the color of *that*!" he said. "You would never think *that* out!"

"What is it, Enrique?"

"Fool," he laughed, "I have asked *you*."

"But I mean what is the thing that I am facing, Enrique?"

"Fool, I tell you I am not going to tell you! I ask you, what is its color?"

It was the little house.

"It—it is difficult, Enrique," she stammered. "Because, Enrique, whatever it is, it is not bright, it is not poignant, like sunlight and running water and—your eyes! But—I think, I think, Enrique, it is *pink*—the same

heavenly color as the round ball of the sun."

"Bianca," he cried threateningly, "this trick you boast of is a trick upon *me*! Who ever heard of a pink house in a wilderness, Bianca? It is the *house* that you are looking at!"

"Whatever it is, Enrique, house or not, I am now certain it is pink," she persisted.

"Yes," he cried, "it *is*. The house is pink. But I believe you knew it. I believe"—and his voice rose roughly—"that—that I have been talking in my sleep!"

"Indeed, Enrique," she cried, "you have never spoken a syllable in your sleep—or, if you have, I have not heard you. I assure you, Enrique, I knew the color of the house from *feeling* it! Last night I heard you weeping through the thunderstorm, but you uttered never a single word, Enrique."

"*Weeping*?" he roared. "Why should I weep at a thunderstorm, you fool?"

"Perhaps I dreamed—perhaps I heard myself weep!" she cried penitently. "The good God knows that I would have cause, Enrique! So the house is pink, *Enrique mio*? I was right? And the mountains—they are violet, Enrique. And that great one that you tell me is the outguard of the Pyrenees, rising back of the house—you have never told me its color—it is white, white, as white as my storm-swept flowers—white!"

"Well, well, Bianca! Well, well, Doradilla!" he muttered. "I grant you there is certainly something in this. Yes, there is *money* in it. Yes, I grant you you are clever. Poor, poor little blind girl, if you can tell the color of the house, just wait till I test you on the dresses I thoughtfully bought for you. Yes, yes, you are clever, and a comfort to me. Go get my supper."

Seated beside the kettle, their figures blocked against the gorgeous sundown, they fed each other. At the smell of

food, he was glorious with kindness, beaming like the riotous sun, as warm and caressing to her; and she, like a mother bird that had hatched a mastodon, guided the spoon in the direction of his greedy noises. Between two of these, he said suddenly:

"By the way, Bianca, *soup* is sometimes beautiful."

One of her hands crept timidly to one of his, and, little by little, she urged it into the clasp of the great fist.

"Enrique, do I give a performance soon? Do we go soon to a town of people?"

"Yes, soon, Doradilla. There is a fine, rich little town yonder, at the other end of this dark, abominable chasm."

"Enrique," she whispered, "if it is a rich little town, there will surely be a priest there. Enrique, Enrique, you will have him marry us, will you not?"

He gulped and screamed and struggled to his feet.

"O-o-o-oh! There, you so angered me that I plunged in the spoon and burned myself!"

She rushed to the waterfall and came swiftly back, with her little hands full of water—so wonderfully held that she had not spilled a drop.

"Why did you go talking nonsense and make me burn myself? There, I feel better. The hot and cold, one on the other, make a nice feeling down below. Indeed, you are clever, the way you fetched the water. But get this marriage absurdity out of your head! Have I not told you to every day this week? How can we ask a priest to marry us, when we have come crying aloud to this town that we are Enrique and Doradilla, husband and wife? And, even if we would so shame ourselves in the eyes of the town, would we dare marry under false names, you innocent? Were we found out, *we might go to jail, Bianca! Would you like*

that? Remember you this, girl, now that we are Doradilla and Enrique, *we are to forget that we were ever some other somebodies!* Never you tell that you were once a flower girl, or I will have *done* with you! Remember, not mentioning the strict laws of the church, the laws of Spain are a bad matter to offend! Talk no more of our marrying!"

"But," she wept, "you promised, you *promised* to marry me, Enrique!"

"And I was such a fool, I meant it when I promised it!" he exclaimed. "I had always wanted to marry you, I tell you! And we left in such haste, I did not stop to think. But if I had, I would have seen, then, what nonsense I was talking. How can you think, Bianca, that a great, fine man would want to marry a woman who could not appreciate what the good God had given her? It is not my fault that you are blind, Bianca."

She wept quietly, speechlessly. He ate and ate.

As he was fishing in the dry bottom of the kettle, she turned to him with a little burst of daring passion.

"I cannot blame you! God made men as He thought best! But all alone in my darkness I have had time and black space to think, and, let me tell you, I believe Gaspar *would* have married me!"

"Do not mention his name!" he roared, hurling down the spoon.

"I will, I will!" she cried, her voice desperate, and, struggling to her feet, she cast her arms forth toward Barcelona. "Gaspar, Gaspar, I have wronged you in my thoughts and in my soul! Gaspar, I love this man, and, therefore, in my soul; and in my thoughts, because I now believe that, blind or *maimed*, I would have been made your wife!"

With a cry of rage, Enrique seized her wrist.

"Fool! Fool!" he cried. "With the full of your beauty and all the light of your seeing eyes, he would never have married you, here, or in heaven, or in hell! *He never intended it!* You innocent, his clothes, his labor, his name, were seduction from the start! *Do you know who he was?* Your *puntillero* was the Marqués del Aragón!"

With a breathless gasp, and then a long-drawn cry, she staggered back from him.

"*There!*" he shouted, following her and wrenching the wallet from his shirt. "Feel that!" And he forced her finger over it. "Do you feel the escutcheon embossed upon the leather?" He snatched out the card and held it, in her fingers, before her face. "Can you read the color of *this*? *It is of your own vaunted whiteness, with the black of his name across it!*"

Her fluttering breath grew quieter and quieter. She stood like a statue while he hurled the wallet and all its papers into the embers under the kettle and watched them burn. He could hear the silvery whisper of her voice again and again and again, in one golden word:

"God! God!"

He was still glaring, his eyes like two glinting coals themselves, down into the glowing ashes, when she crept to his side and tried to steal her fingers into his.

"But at least, Rodrigo—let me call you that once more, for the last time!—you will not deny me—*love*, Rodrigo? Beloved, you whom I have learned to cling to, you will not forever, Rodrigo, deny me—*love*?"

The great creature began to tremble, and for an instant his huge fist closed tensely, crushingly, around her little hand. But as she spoke again, he tossed it from him and stood gazing down at her with eyes that danced with delight as they drank her humility.

"Beloved, it is as you threatened

long ago. I worship you, I worship you, Rodrigo!"

Uncontrollably, he threw his enormous stature to the earth and rolled over and over, shouting:

"That is funny, Bianca! That is very, very funny! There are some things in this world that make a bright man laugh, Bianca! One is when an *espada* slaps a great, big bull on the nose while he is running his sword into the foolish, raging creature—I almost pitch out of my seat when I see that!—and another is what a funny man said once, that when a woman is not loved by men, she turns to her God! Such is your case, Bianca! You, who were so proud, and would have none of big Rodrigo when he wooed you and would have married you, turned now to a craven girl, who sues to him for his mere unhonoring love! Turn to your God, Bianca! You called *me* your god this evening, which was quite right, but you need not turn this way! That is funny, funny!"

And again he rolled over and over, squealing in his glee.

She did not stir or shiver. A little flame of calm, quiet fire burned in her voice.

"I will *make* you love me, Rodrigo, *yet!* Do you hear that? I will *make* you!" And as he at last stopped laughing and sat up on the grass, he heard her voice lifting to the God to Whom he had recommended her:

"Father in heaven, send Thy pity upon those who adore unsatisfied!"

Dusk was gathering into darkness. Soft night stole over the heavens, over the little house and the steep slope and the waterfall, and sleep stole over Enrique. Stars, palely-delicate as Bianca's face, shone out of the deep black semisphere, lustering the heavy, strange gold ringlets that fell down over her shoulders and the dimmed colors of the seven little globes that she was patiently tossing, tossing.

CHAPTER VIII.

Terassa.

The pretty green, at the top of her green hill.

The population, given a half holiday, standing and sitting all about in groups, under the tall trees of the square, on the steps of the fonda, and even in the alley alongside it; including the little boys, stringing about in an uneven, straggling line, and trying conscientiously to be excited.

A lovely, summerlike fall day, of French colors—blue sky, white clouds, pink hills.

And popular doldrums.

Such were the elements and conditions environing Padre Pedro, whose looks had gone from anxious to despairing; for the scene, the state, and the people were, in sum total, like a drama gone wrong at rehearsal. Something was certainly the matter with Terassa, repeated the padre inwardly over and over, unwilling, as yet, to admit that something was the matter with himself—specifically, his unwillingness to chastise his sulky village. Rosa was not sulking, and she, he feared heartbrokenly, was drunk, so loud and heedless was her defiance. She was seated at the piano, which, like an arrow fired straight at his orders, she had hauled into the vestibule of the fonda; and Inés was seated beside her.

When, totally outraged at this latter daring, he had approached Inés with lightning in his eye, she had informed him that she was an atheist again and could have no converse with a Roman priest.

So taken was his breath by this that he had gone away speechless and vanquished, never seeing that Rosa's hand had been under Inés' leg, buried, nails, cloth, and temperament, in her writhing flesh. The torment in her eyes should have informed him, but his

mind was dazed, and he walked off, believing that her horrible laugh of agony was derision.

Theodore, glorious in pink-and-silver tights, was standing on the fonda roof, waiting the padre's signal to begin. And Simpatica, her pretty figure and her full company of pretty green birds covered by her rose-colored cloak, her eyes smiling encouragement to the padre when she caught his glance, but clouding with worry for his feelings when he gazed elsewhere, was seated, waiting likewise, on a platform built for the occasion in the center of the square. The little boys were mainly near to this, striving to watch her diligently. But of the grown-ups, scarcely any one heeded either her or Teddy. Even those of them who were fondest of the padre could not seem to keep their eyes from the vestibule and its strange tableau of instrument and Rosa and Inés.

There seemed to be something irresistibly fascinating about these two ladies and the four wrinkled hands that, whenever the padre would raise one of his toward Teddy or Simpatica, would rise also, and poise, ready to descend upon the helpless keyboard.

"Alas!" cried the padre, tears springing to his eyes; but no one noticed him. Two weeks ago, a friend of Rosa's, who had been dead and buried in Madrid for forty years, had proved the weakness of rumor by suddenly sending her a piece of sheet music from the capital; and, had the gentle priest been given to cursing, he would have cursed the day when this friend of Rosa's past awoke. Generations before, she and Rosa had been at school together for a year, and had together studied the pianoforte. This present tune was the rage of the season in Madrid, and its stirring measures had resurrected the old friend's memories, if not her person. It was "The Mysteries of the Heart," by Villena. As

cultivated persons know, this melody is a brilliant, but a dangerous, thing. Its name is a succession of Spanish syllables so attractive that their charm covers, for the time being, the rigor of its meaning; while the motives so enthrall, in early hearings, that they do not betray, till too late, the risk of eventual madness.

The version sent was for the pianoforte, and for four hands; and, ever since its arrival, pianoforte had been Rosa's conversation, pianoforte her occupation and preoccupation. She had haunted the fonda, which possessed the only piano in Terassa. She had recovered, as a long-silent liar may suddenly recover his talent for fiction, all the dash and vivacity of her year at school. And the whole townsfolk, from Raméro and Jacinta, its oldest citizens, down through the ages and classes and masses to the thirty little boys, had been inoculated with the wild "*Misterios del Corazon*."

Having discovered in Inés, she said, a likeness to her old friend as she now imagined her, dead and dug up, to be, she had heckled and bullied her, with fierce reminders of her past sin of atheism, into the rôle of pupil and across the green into the fonda.

All who know the great piece remember that it is alternately very soft and very forte, quite like a butterfly changing to a bull and back again. And Terassa became similarly alternative, from a hell at any hour of the day or night to a ghastly oblivion, when Rosa slept from exhaustion. She gave Inés, of course, the basso and less prominent part, and taught her as a terrier is taught with sugar, positioning her raised hands according to certain spots in the lithograph on the front of the instrument, with threats of starvation or the whip if she did not bring them down with the fingers such and such distances apart, at moments indicated by the pressure of her foot. This sacri-

ficed one pedal of the piano, quite aside from one of the terrified Inés, but Rosa could reach the loud one of the instrument and the soft one of her friend, which were all she cared for. And when, against her advice, the padre had said a last "No!" to the festival, and planned, as a peace offering to the town, a wineless entertainment by Tédi and Simpatica, she had threatened to interrupt it by a public piano recital on the green.

Twice Tédi had irritably braced his shoulders; twice Simpatica had whirled her cloak from hers; and twice they had caught each other's eyes and then wilted as they had found themselves staring helplessly, like the rest of Terassa, at the four eagle hands waiting to swoop down and bury themselves in "*The Mysteries of the Heart*."

Desperate thoughts came to the padre. His feelings had been cruelly hurt, but they were turning definitely now from injury to indignation. He even thought of breaking the piano with one of the iron chairs that decked the vestibule, but the proprietor of the fonda prized it highly because of the picture of the rapine of Eros on it, and would never have understood that this was a further reason for destroying it. Besides, the priest reflected, if he must be driven to a show of passion, it must be passion of a stately sort. Then a memory startled and inspired him.

That morning, for the first time in years, he had not said his prayers. As his knees had bent to fetch him down beside his bed, "*The Mysteries of the Heart*" had come crashing through the dawn like a horrible hymn to the sun, and, with a hysterical sob, he had fled the house and secreted himself among the dewy jacintas in his garden. No wonder God was not upon his side! He would say his prayers here, now! And, with his face lighting with hope,

and regardless of the people, he threw his arms impulsively toward heaven.

His right arm was to have been for Theodore, his left for Simpatica. They thought it was the signal—a desperate double one. The pink cloak whirled from the parrot woman and her birds rose in a little cloud above her. Theodore had flown as quickly as they. He was standing on his hands on the fonda chimney. But there were four other hands in the day's destiny. A quite sincere cheer had come from the little boys and a tepid one from some few of the vineyarders, but the mixed sound was drowned. The four had fallen.

So had the padre's two.

He sprang with the swiftness of Theodore. He seized Rosa about the waist and planted her, like a tulip, on the green. He did the same thing to Inés. The performances on roof and platform stopped. The little boys, with one accord, sat down, and the lolling populace, with as single a thought, stood up. Save once, upon José, for a childish wickedness, Terassa had never seen those great, kind hands of the padre's used in violence.

Amarillis, the timidest and smallest lady in Terassa, who had been sitting on the fonda steps by the piano, stopped weeping. Whenever "The Mysteries of the Heart" was played, she wept, whether because of some such mystery of her own, or because she was sorry for the padre, no one knew. With her wide eyes fastened upon her two chastised chums now, she was smiling wonderfully.

Rosa was erect, motionless, her mouth open, silent as if astonishment had frozen her. It was not so with Inés. Her constitution, worn threadbare by the week's tragedy forced upon her, had given way when she saw the padre's hands coming for her, raised and distended as hers had been so many hundred times; and, though

she stood where she had been put, as unmoving as Rosa, she sent forth shriek after shriek of fear and horror. She believed she was damned, though it was not her fault.

The padre walked to the center of the green.

"Téodor, come down! Simpatica, come here! Toninio, Gil, Benito, Sancho, when it best suits you, take away the platform! My people, I withdraw our entertainment. I have given you half holiday. I do not take that from you. Amuse yourselves."

There was an uneasy stirring through the square, for the padre's simplicity had a taste of iron in it. Several of the little boys began to cry. Two of them had sidled up to him, Bernardo in the wake of Theodore, and Tito under cover of Simpatica's cloak. Their complements, Guillermo and José, hovered toward him also. Consciences were stirring, and so were hesitant feet. The people did not know just where to go. They wished that he had ordered them back to work, instead of to amusing themselves, a matter difficult at such short notice. Gil and Sancho and Benito tried to whistle, but got no farther than their hands in their pockets. Inés' shrieks were slowly dying out, and from amid his small group of faithfuls the padre spoke again, and more good-humoredly:

"We will all try to forget this. And if we remember it, we will say that Terassa, with one motion, this morning, got out on the wrong side of bed."

Rosa came to life suddenly.

"I do not consider that a modest speech!" she cried, and started for the piano.

But Inés, with one last, prolonged shriek, snatched at her skirt, and Amarillis, with astounding promptness and ability, leaped to the piano and sat on the keyboard, with a wild harvest of discords; and the padre's voice rang

out through them like a church bell, solemn and sonorous:

"Let us pray!"

Silence fell sharply upon the green. Shameful heads were bowed. Nervous hands were folded.

"My Father, the indolence of our vintage season has afflicted Terassa, unsettled her people, fetched out an array of troubles among my little boys. Confused and anxious, I have sought to please my loved townspeople. I have failed. I pray to Thee to send some beneficent influence to my town, for the straightening of their discontented minds, the overcoming of the fancies of an overprosperous folk! Amen!"

So much deeper than ever was the hush when he stopped speaking that his prayer did not seem done. It trailed away, sending back little snatches of echo, into the chasm. And there an answer seemed to meet it and mingle with it, far away—eerie syllables, mysterious, queer, and distant, flying toward Terassa from the mountains:

"En-ree-ee-ee-kay!"

Theodore, at the padre's side, had bowed his head reverently as any Spaniard in the town, but he had kept his hands upon his sparkling hips the while, and he recovered from devotion, in cool Protestant fashion, before any one else.

"So you are still believing in your prayers, *padre mio*?" he smiled. "Does nothing discourage you? Your prayer for me, padre, has not been answered yet—and you launch a second!"

Padre Pedro did not reply. He laid a hand upon the boy's arm. The strange flight of sound in the chasm had reached Terassa in a near repetition. The startled town was listening like the priest.

"What is it, *Téodor*?" he demanded.

"En-ree-ee-ee-kay!"

"Dora-dee-ee-eel-ya!"

Guillermo and José began to run up the slope that rises beyond the fonda at the back of the green—the utmost height of Terassa's peaked hill, which plunges, from here, almost straight down into the chasm.

"En-ree-ee-ee-kay!"

"Dora-dee-ee-eel-ya!"

"I am Enree-ee-kay!"

Quite as excited as any of the little boys, and almost as active in the use of his legs, the padre ran to the top of the slope, Bernardo and Tito speeding before him, Theodore and Simpatica at his heels. Half the town was crowding across the green and upward. The piano and the rapine involved in it were forgotten; Rosa, Inés, and Amarillis were sidewise, together, at the very edge of the precipice.

Far below, a figure had emerged from the gloom of the chasm into the sunlight, where the rugged walls widened into the plain. Even from the stronghold of the gazing Terassans, it impressed as a great creature, with its big, spreading shadow and the heavy, bulking pack upon its back. Following it was another figure, smaller, and a woman's, but equally strange, for, as she wended her tardy way in the track of her leader, her head glittered in the sunshine like a swimming goldfish.

"I am Doradee-ee-eelya, poor, poor Golden-poll!"

"Gypsies! Fortune tellers! God be praised!" cried the little boys; and a swarm of chatter broke loose from the craning townfolk. Those who could not see began to run back across the green and along the Chasm Road, toward the padre's high-perched house, to crane from there.

"A pair of mountebanks, padre," said Theodore. "A father and daughter, from the looks of them. But are they the answer to your first prayer or your second? Are they the beneficent influence, *padre mio*, or—the lady?"

"Perhaps both, Tédi," said the padre, smiling.

"Her profession suits me," said Theodore. "And she looks a trickstress of some sort, certainly. But she was to be blackest-haired, and she comes from the wrong direction. The storm was to blow her straight into town from the *vega*, remember!"

From the chasm, a steep little path winds up to the back of the fonda alley, and at the foot of this the big fellow had stopped and gazed dubiously upward. At sight of the staring crowd, he caught off his little red cap and bowed so profoundly that the little boys screamed with delight. Then he stood, scratching his head and looking at the steep climb and his frail companion and his stalwart bundle. At last he shook his rotund head, waved his cap at the crowd, took the girl by the hand, and started off around the hillside.

"She is coming by way of the *vega*, after all, Tédi," smiled the priest.

"Unless she notices the turn into the Chasm Road. Fate, fate!" laughed Theodore.

But the mountebank had already missed it and was plodding into the *vega*.

The little boys started rushing wildly down to the green. The figures had disappeared, and the magic voices came floating up as mysteriously as before:

"I am Doradee-ee-eelya, poor, poor Golden-head!"

"And I am Enree-ee-kay, her gigantic husband!"

The old priest and the young American turned to each other with one thought, with mutual laughter.

"Evidently they are the beneficent influence, Tédi—the lady is married!"

The mountebanks could now be seen from the Chasm Road, and this was soon lined with men and women in a long, solid row, broken only by its little

sentinel cork trees and not by a single little boy; for every one of the thirty had streamed into the highway itself and scampered all the way down to the poppy fields that they had left deserted at the foot of the hill, where they now formed an excited convoy, to greet the visitors. With his heart thankful at the sudden pleasure of his people, Padre Pedro waited at the entrance to the green that topped the highway, to greet them there.

They were crossing the small bridge leading over the dry river bed to the highway. The bright whiteness of the bridge absorbed that of the girl's gown, so that her strange golden poll was like a coin rolling across it in the sunlight, until it became like a bit of sunlight itself moving over the rich brown-yellows of the plain. The highway was dotted with people, now. The romantic strangers had reached Rosa's house, across from the poppy fields, and the little boys were swarming around them as if they were old acquaintances. The two voices, one low and harsh and strangely fascinating, the other high and silvery and more fascinating still, were raised together.

"Come see our performance! Come forth and see Enrique and Doradilla!"

Up the highway, singsonging their names in these extraordinary musics, the slender, white-froked golden poll and her giant master plodded; not carrying good humor in their wake, but sending it before them to the top, where they halted before the padre, as the whole village crowded around them.

The little boys now sat down in a semicircle and feasted their eyes in leisure on their giant; but the priest's looks and those of all the grown folk were riveted, for a long moment's silence, upon Golden-poll.

The glimmering, unnatural, heavy hair, the thrilling beauty, emphasized by such arresting pallor, of the pure,

classic face, and the wonderful hyacinthine color of the great, expressionless eyes, like paint in a marble head, were breath-taking to the padre and his people.

"How lovely! How *terribly* lovely!" breathed *Simpatica*, her helpless adjective carrying her voice above its intended whisper; and her hands lifted in so impulsive a gesture that her little birds flew out from under her cloak and swirled, like a puff of green powder, out of its rose color and around the peculiar guests, with shrill cries that broke the spell of silence.

Enrique doffed his little red jingling cap and bowed so low that he swept the highway with it.

"*Salud!*" he cried, and drew himself up to the full of his magnificent bulk. "Behold Enrique!"

And then the pale, exquisite girl beside him spoke:

"And behold *Doradilla*, all you kind folk whom she can never behold! I am his wife, the golden poll—and I am blind!"

CHAPTER IX.

The padre's second prayer had indeed been answered. By the time the two mountebanks were established with two chairs and their bundle under the great plane tree at the right of the square, their magic, whatever it might be, thought the priest, had worked a small miracle throughout *Terassa*. He could not find a disgruntled or a listless face, no matter where he searched for one. He had offered the pair, for hostelry, a little empty shop at the corner, and, to his increased pleasure—for here the bad old magician had anchored and dispensed his wickedness last year—Enrique had refused it for rooftree.

"My wife shall prepare for the performance there, but we sleep under God's pretty starlight, your worship!" he had said, and his beautiful, wan

consort had smiled her assent—her first smile in *Terassa*—as the priest had patted her slim hands affectionately.

"Whatever your magic, friends, I am sure it is white. Indeed, who could doubt that, looking at your wife? I suspect *she* is your white magic?"

"She is well enough, though, unfortunately, blind," said Enrique, untying his bundle.

All thirty of the little boys were already infatuated with the pleasant monster, who had smiled at and patted them all the way up the hill; and their reform grew with the moments. There had been lately two quarrels in their ranks between the two youngest, *Tito* and *José*, as to which was stronger, and the two oldest, *Guillermo* and *Bernardo*, as to which was older, so that a switching about of intimates had taken place, to the depression of all four. And the padre was rejoiced to see the elder pair now side by side again, helping Enrique with the bundle, and *José* and *Tito*, hand in hand, explaining about each other to the lady.

This was not all, however. When it was given out that the visitors would not perform until night, a conclave of all thirty took place; and presently *Bernardo*, the most reticent of them, came to the padre and said that they had decided to go back to work, half holiday or not.

"It was *Guillermo's* idea, padre," he declared, "and I myself deserve no credit, except that it is a special sacrifice on my part, because I had intended to make *Tédi* tell me stories about New York and California all the afternoon."

Presently they trooped in a body down to the poppy fields, and, mortified and inspired by this early piety, the men decided to go back to the vineyards. They did so shamefacedly, and, before starting, *Gil*, *Sancho*, and *Benito* came to the padre to ask if, as

the mountebanks might like to perform upon it, they might leave the platform standing. So foregone a conclusion made the question ridiculous, but it delighted the priest that they had asked it. Even Rosa seemed restored from savagery to civilization. He heard her saying to Theodore:

"Do you notice, my friend, that the dear monster never leaves his woman for an instant? No matter what he does or where he goes, he either drags her after him or does it in a circle if she is sitting still, so that she is never more than six feet off from him! The creature is quite lucky to be blind, I think!"

These remarks were not agreeable, but they were more agreeable than her piano playing, and Padre Pedro rejoiced to know that she would speak at all to Theodore. In this case, it was the American who did not speak. For some reason, he did not answer Rosa. But this the padre did not notice, for his look had chanced, suddenly, on one cheerless face.

It was a very small face, with very big eyes, and it was gazing out from "The Rapine of Eros"—for Amarillis had gone back to sit on the piano. She was weeping again; silently, as usual, for Amarillis almost never made any noise, happy or unhappy, and the tears were of the large kind commonly wept in silence.

"What is it, Amarillis?" the padre asked gently. "Rosa cannot play the piano while you are sitting on it, so what are you weeping for?"

But Amarillis only shook her head and wept on. Following the direction of her eyes, he saw the fair, staring countenance of Doradilla, white in the shadow of the big sycamore far across the green, and he thought that the diminutive old lady's tears must be at the pathos of her beauty. But again Amarillis shook her head, and this time also pointed. It was Enrique who had

caused her tears, and, to the padre's further astonishment, she suddenly spoke.

"Tck! Ugh!" said Amarillis. "Tck!"

"Come, Amarillis," said the padre. "It is the best-natured giant in the world!"

"Tck!" said Amarillis.

As the shadows lengthened and the approach of the supper hour cleared the green of the townswomen, the big fellow's deep voice drifted now and again across the square.

"Well, yes, it is a fairish town, Doradilla. This is the top of a hill, with vineyards down the sides, and I can see the outguard sticking up off there. Oh, a well-looking town. What you in your simplicity would call beautiful, I am afraid. There are houses all round the square, none of them big enough, but all of them neat, and of as many colors as my handsome clothes. So it is a pity you cannot see it. Poor, poor little blind girl! But what I like best about it, Doradilla"—and his voice was remarkably loud in these floating words—"is the fine old priest, with his noble face and kind actions—and so large, like me! You should see the way he looks upon us! What a pity that you cannot, poor little blind girl!"

She was feeling, with her delicate white hands, the mottled bark of the big sycamore under which she was seated.

"Are they all planeta trees, Enrique, around the square?"

"Yes, poor little blind girl, they are all big planetas!"

"Then, with the many colors of the houses, it must be quite like the rambla!" she exclaimed.

He turned fiercely upon her.

"What have I told you about speaking of the city?"

But all the padre heard, as he started happily homeward from the green, was: "Poor little blind girl! Poor little Doradilla!"

Teddy was standing near the fonda—the last townsman on the green. He felt, inexplicably, more a townsman this evening than ever before in his adoption of Terassa—oddly excited, childishly part and parcel of the unreasonably momentous visitation. He was as rare a figure, in his own way, as the mountebank or the golden poll across the square. He was still in his giddy circus costume. He had left the place only once, and that had been for a very few moments.

When the pair had reached the top of the highway and had halted in the crowd, the woman had seemed to stare right at him, her wide eyes fastened not quite upon his, but just above them. He had felt suddenly embarrassed by his pink, muscular garb.

And when her silver voice had uttered, "I am blind!" after his instant heart leap of horror and pity, the queer self-consciousness had possessed him, ridiculously enough, more than before. The great blue eyes had seemed to be reading his very thoughts. His face had grown as pink as the rest of him. He had felt that he must immediately put something on, and, in swift obedience to the absurd thought, he had run wildly home. And what he had put on was his cap.

At a little distance, he looked now, in the slant of sundown, like a tinted statue of Apollo, with the head of a Paris apache—for the cap was at a pensive angle. He was scratching his head, as he had seen Enrique do down in the chasm, as the monster had considered the hardship of the path. And he was not thinking of his life work now, nor of home, nor of new steeples to conquer. His thoughts were of Spain; they were more particular than that—they were of Terassa. Yet his questionable Spanish, which he had achieved with such arduous perseverance and so many broken doses of English, had in this very moment de-

serted him, and he was speaking softly to himself, in simple American:

"Well, well, here's luck, Theodore! The lady can't even see what a man you are!"

CHAPTER X.

Padre Pedro, peaceful at heart after having succeeded, at sundown, in saying his morning prayers, seated himself, with a long sigh of contentment, for his supper.

He had directed that the mountebanks be provided in the town's name with a generous repast, and this had been fetched to them very politely by the little boys—several hearty viands and two kinds of wine, red and yellow, decked with some of their finest poppies, yellow and red.

Enrique had given Doradilla all he thought she needed, and was now alone under the tree, eating and drinking happily. He had sent her into the little shop, which was but a few paces away, to begin dressing for the performance. Looking up from the last of the red in one hand and the yellow in the other, he saw one of the little boys coming back. It was José, and he was carrying a newspaper.

"Well, well, you are a fine young man!" said Enrique, smiling grandly. "What have you come to see me for?"

"I thought, caballero," said José grandiloquently, "that for your better comfort, you might like to read the *periodico* after your supper. It is a week old, but it may amuse you," and he proffered it.

José told the truth, but not all of it. He and Tito were anxious to know whether the mountebank could read.

"Well, well, for my very best comfort of all," said Enrique, leaning back against the tree and crossing his hands upon his happy stomach, "you just read it out to me, young man, and we will see then whether you know how to read."

José was dashed, but not discouraged.

"I would, with pleasure, caballero, but you might disbelieve what I read you, it is so exciting. Indeed, you might even call me a liar."

"What? Such a word—I?" exclaimed Enrique severely.

"I assure you," said José, "there is the story of a dreadful murder in it."

"You are a liar!" shouted Enrique, sitting up. "What murder is it? A nice little boy like you to talk about murder!"

José was terrified for a moment; but, as he watched Enrique's face, he began to laugh. It was puffing in and out like a bellows.

"There, I knew you were joking!" said Enrique, and he sighed in relief.

"But I am not joking, caballero. See, here it is, right here." And José pointed.

"There, I knew you could not read!" exclaimed Enrique, staring hard at the sheet. "What does it say? Let me see if you can."

"Shall I read it all?" asked José, sitting down beside him. "A beautiful flower girl has disappeared from Barcelona, and an unknown man was found dead in her lodging. She was a pale, fragile young girl, but she must have been as strong as an ox, judging—"

"Stop!" yelled Enrique. "I—I am surprised at such a pleasant little boy, with such a nice, pretty face, rejoicing in such horrors! Now, look you here, say nothing of this, you or any of you little boys, in presence of my wife, who is so tender-hearted it would spoil her performance. And look you here again—go you instantly to your dear, kind old padre, who sent me such a good supper, and ask him if he will come to see me right away. I may not leave my poor wife or I would seek out him."

"Yes, yes, caballero!" cried José, humiliated and penitent, and he hastened off.

"O-o-o-oh! O-o-o-oh!" moaned Enrique, as quietly as possible.

From the little shop, Doradilla came softly up behind him. She was but partly dressed, and had covered herself with the old overcoat.

"Beloved," she said sorrowfully, "what are you weeping for?"

"And what have you come out of the shop for?" roared Enrique.

"Because I cannot bear it—hearing you weep, my darling!" she whispered. "Why do you so? There is no thunderstorm, is there?"

"There will be one right now, if you do not go back!" he cried.

"But I *must* know why you weep, darling!" she persisted. "You know how wretched it makes me always, Enrique!"

"Well, well," whimpered Enrique, "if you must know, it is because, after all the trouble I have had to teach you, I have no means of knowing whether you will give a good performance. And we will be surely ruined if you do not, Doradilla!"

"Enrique," she cried desperately, "even if I were stupider than I am, the hope of your approval, of your—love, Enrique, would inspire me! And remember the colors. And remember, too, I can tell fortunes. I have promised it! Enrique, since I have been blind, strange powers of divination have come to me. I shall thrill these people! I shall thrill you, Enrique! You have yet to know!"

"Well, well, see that you do," he wept. "Now, go back to the shop."

But, before obeying him, she slipped her arms suddenly, tightly, around his neck, and her voice at his ear was almost fierce in its whisper:

"I tell you, Enrique, you are going to love me when you see me on that platform to-night! I have sworn it!"

Then she glided hastily, meekly away.

Across the green, Padre Pedro was approaching him.

"My friend," he exclaimed, as he came up, "what is your trouble? What has affected you so?"

"My disposition, your worship," said Enrique, fresh tears coursing down his great, smooth cheeks. "Oh, your worship and honor, have you heard of this dreadful murder in the city?"

"Indeed, my whole town has taken of it," answered the padre. "Until you came, my people were full of the subject."

"I am too tender-natured," said Enrique, drying his eyes. "I should not care what happens in Barcelona, for I have never been there, nor has my wife. But I wept to hear such a tale on a young child's lips. Here, however, is my trouble, your worship: Should my wife learn of this, so soft is her lovely character—she being blind and all that, and with a foolish, romantic mind—she would collapse down into a swoon, and into another on top of that, and like enough another and another. She cannot tolerate murders. You should have seen her at the bullfight once! What a time she made, screaming worse than the bull, and swooning and swooning! She mortified me worse than if she had broke her leg! Now, could you not send out a message to your kind people, your worship, that such terrors must not come to her ears while we stop in your town? It would break my heart, I think, if I saw my poor little blind wife in another of her unconscious fits. For charity's sake, your worship, will you do so much?" And he looked up at the gentle priest with his big silver eyes full of big silver tears.

The padre's eyes, too, were moist.

"I will do so delightedly, friend. Nothing could be simpler, and my people will obey me. Besides, they already like you and your lovely wife, and will

be *simpaticos* with your devotion and her tenderness."

Enrique's face burst into a radiance of smiles.

"I thank you—I thank you, and will pray for you, your worship and your honor!"

"You are a good fellow," smiled the padre, and he held out his hand.

CHAPTER XI.

Had the enthralled Terassans known of Enrique's remarks upon scenery, they would the more have marveled at their village green that night. It was a black night, one when the moon would not show until toward morning. There was just enough dim starlight to display the distant mountains peakedly and darkly in a half-moon to the north and west, and the square itself was natively quite black. Its torches, set in long lines, flared around upon grass that they made intensely green and upward upon the mottled trunks and heavy leaves of the planetas, throwing the stately shadows of these into weird relief, and forming, by their own arrangement, an oblong of the discernible ground. To any one familiar with Barcelona, it was thus strangely like a big fragment of the ramblas uprooted and blown, intact, by a hurricane, into the mountains.

But a part of this, of course, was accident, and to appreciate the mountebank's genius in enhancing what he despised, the eye needed to seek the core of the picture. Here, where the platform stood, near the giant planeta and well under its far-stretched branches, a rich delicacy of tones, suave as a distant painting, tender as a sketch in water colors, lured the gathering townspeople into a chatter of delight. Out of the mountebank's mysterious bundle, a vast amount of magic had appeared. A curtain hung toward the back of the stage—drooping, graceful, a little diag-

onal—and overhead a canopy. The two materials glowed faintly in the torch-light like satin and silk; the two colors were those of the primrose and the wistaria.

The pale yellow was the canopy, which was caught over a sycamore branch, and from where its upward curve ceased, a zigzag succession of softly glowing lights—spread above the platform among the big leaves—seven tinted lanterns, the colors of Doradilla's little spheres—violet, green, and lavender, red and yellow, rose pink and robin's-egg blue.

Whether, despising those who saw beauty in sundowns and mountains, he could the better pierce the hearts of their weak whims; or whether he had prepared the whole setting for his consort in line with his own pet notion, as he would have put flowers on a woman; or whether, in truth, he actually did love color, but unintentionally, as he had spilled the *marqués'*, the magic-working mountebank had loaned, with his lanterns and curtain and canopy, the last points of romance and picture to *Terassa's* pretty green.

"Come one, come all!" he was calling, through a funnel made of the newspaper with the murder in it. "Come see gentle Enrique and his poor blind wife, who never can see how he weeps at her misfortune. She can only hear him, as she hears him now, while she waits for the performance to begin." And he sobbed through the megaphone and bowed and smiled. The bow was contortive, for he was lolling under the sycamore, like a sentinel between the crowd and the shop where his prize was hidden.

"Come one, come all! I have better goods than a beggar hawking buns! Come see the blind beauty! Come see her and her fascinating giant!"

There was now a second likeness to the city ramblas, for, with talk and ejaculation and whir and swish and a rich

glimmer of garb, the town was interlacing through the scene, slowly seething, made indefinite, and so magnified, by the ebony tree shadows and the soft yellow flare. There was a familiar and pleasing informality in the occasion.

Gil, Sancho, and Benito had volunteered for orchestra, and were seated next the stage—*Rosa* also had volunteered for orchestra, but all who had heard her had pretended that they had not heard—and, naturally, most of the little boys were well forward, just back of the trio. But there was otherwise no precedence; those who desired chairs fetched them from home; there was as much standing as sitting; and prominent characters were dotted about, instead of grouped together. *Amarillis* sat in the very center of the crowd, on a high stool. *Rosa* and *Inés* were at opposite outskirts. The padre strolled around, while *Theodore*, at the rear, stood in the dark, studying the beautiful picture with serious eyes, and now and then unconsciously biting his lips, which betweenwhiles would relax for him to grin at himself—as he had grinned before his mirror after supper—for having dressed—from filigreed Spanish tan-and-white shoes to brass cravat pin, below and above a suit of pepper and salt and olives—with as much out-for-a-Sunday care as if the blind could see.

Enrique had announced that, for the sake of unusual honesty, no price would be charged until after he had performed, when the good folk could better tell how much to give, and when he would pass his pretty red cap; and that afterward, when *Doradilla* did her color readings, she could be paid by those she read for; and that in the meanwhile, in her wonderful juggling tricks, as many coins might be thrown to her as God chose.

The tinkle of the vineyard trio ceased, and a wild handclapping began with the little boys and spread

through the grown folk. Enrique had suddenly mounted to the platform.

"The blind beauty," he said, "will captivate you presently. She tells fortunes, a pleasure reserved for to-morrow night. Whereas, to-night, she will amaze you with her readings of colors, impossible to any other blind beauty. Until she comes, be satisfied, I beseech you, with my own humble endeavors. In a small, insignificant man, these feats would be small and insignificant, but in one so tall and weighty, they are magnificent!" And he turned a handspring, which was, true enough, as large as himself.

The little boys cheered, and looked for a whole series like it; but Enrique stood still and called out in a terrible voice:

"Who is going yonder? Your priest has proffered me that shop, and no one may go near it! Mark you, Terassa, you must play fair, and leave my wife in peace while I perform!"

"He is right!" cried Padre Pedro. "I do not think, friend, that any one was approaching the shop. But let it, all of you, be understood!"

Enrique ceased peering into the darkness.

"I thank your worship!" And he turned another handspring.

From the area of flaring torchlight, it was difficult to see accurately into the surrounding black, and the intruders escaped detection. But two of them there had been, and they came face to guilty face behind the crowd.

"Well!" said Rosa. "This proves what I said to you this afternoon—that the big brute keeps her in a world-wide cage. And when I made that acute observation to you, you did not have the civility to answer me. In fact, *no-body* seems to hear what I say to-day! I offered to furnish the music for these two fools, and no one replied."

Tédi did not reply now. He had flushed crimson as she had addressed

him. He had gone toward the little shop on so rapid an impulse that no shame had hinted at his conscience until the boom of the mountebank's voice had come through the dark. And he had been biting his lips with rage at the giant and at himself when he had encountered Rosa.

"Come," she continued, "because we have caught each other in a nefarious little matter, will you continue to sulk and refuse to speak to me? We are in the same boat, for another reason, too—these tricksters have spoiled my performance, just as I spoiled yours. Should we not be friends?"

"I have always been your friend, Rosa. I thought you were not mine," said Theodore simply. "I am glad to know you are."

"Well, do not count too much upon it!" rejoined Rosa. "But as you are some one in a humor to understand me, I will tell you this, and from your own language. In the English tongue, there is a line of poetry which says: 'There is something rotten in Denmark.' Have I got it right?"

"I never heard it," said Theodore, bewildered.

"You must come from common people, then," said Rosa, "for the padre himself will tell you it is famous English poetry. It was from him I got it, when he chose to reflect upon me in a discussion once. Never mind that, however. The point is here, my friend—I believe these two people are Denmark."

"I see nothing—rotten," said Teddy, hesitating at the word, "except, Rosa, except—the idea of that—that huge—and that—that—"

"Just so!" said Rosa. "It is disgusting of her!" And she marched back into the crowd.

The village square had never been noisier than it was at this moment. Enrique was capering wildly about the stage, and the little boys were wildly

shrieking. When he was out of breath, he came forward and bowed and bowed, to a tune of frantic applause, and beaming with gratification. But as he was about to turn back again to his cavorting, he paused, his eyes as wide as Doradilla's ever had been, and then he began to shriek with delight himself. He bent far over, his hands on his stomach, and straightened up again, howling with glee. And the little boys howled. And a contagion of howling went from him straight through the audience, and laughter bade fair to sicken Terassa before it was discovered what he was laughing at, and this was not until he began to point, with renewed screams of merriment, at the very center of the crowd.

There, on her high stool, sat Amarillis, her hands planted on her pipe-stem knees, weeping as if her miniature heart would break.

"O-o-o-o-oh!" howled Enrique. "I will die laughing! Mark you, little boys, there is nothing else quite so funny in the whole world as to see a big fat man fall down on his face, with all his arms and legs spread out, helpless and flat! And the next funniest is to see a little bit of a poor old woman, with great, big eyes, weeping like a young infant! O-o-o-o-o-oh!" And he doubled over again.

The din multiplied; and even Padre Pedro, sorry as he felt for Amarillis and her more and more bitter tears, could not keep his gentle face sober for her sake.

"Téodor," he said, leaning helplessly against a tree, "I have been seldom enough to the theater, yet I have seen some fine acting, French as well as Spanish. And, let me tell you, this fellow, found out and enlarged upon by some commercial enterprise, would fetch Paris or America—I believe it!"

The noise had reached a climax, and the little boys were dancing like Enrique.

"Do something more!" they howled. "Do something more!"

And Enrique, inspired by their swarming in vocal and bodily concert toward the platform, stopped his laughing, and bounded into new antics.

"Jump higher! Higher! Higher!" shrieked the little boys, and, smiling and bouncing, Enrique did as he was bid.

"Turn around! Jump the other way!" they cried, and, in confused enthusiasm, Enrique did something—no one ever knew quite what. With a thump that shuddered the platform, he went down flat, his face to the boards, his arms, his legs, spread like a dried starfish, and the loudest howl of the night burst ecstatically over him.

The giant's face was red and astonished as he sat up and looked around him.

"Stop laughing!" he shouted. "I have hurt myself!" And, at sight and sound of him, the delirium doubled.

"What are you laughing for?" he demanded, struggling to his feet. "Will you not listen? I tell you I have hurt my stomach and my chin!" And he began to cry as pitifully as Amarillis.

From exhaustion, there was an instant's semiquiet. But on the wings of the little boys' inexhaustible screams, the crescendo of wild bliss rose again, with Amarillis, now seated, as it were, on its top note, laughing shrillest of all.

Enrique pondered dubiously for a moment, and then stopped scratching his head and smiled so widely that a new yell greeted him.

"There!" he said. "There is nothing else does my kind heart so much good as the merriment of thirty little boys! My wife and I are going to have thirty little boys, as soon as we can spare time from our pretty performances."

"Come, come!" cried Rosa in a most irritable voice from amid the audience. "That would be a prettier performance than you are giving now!"

"Hush, Rosa!" cried the padre painfully.

"That is a very impolite old woman!" spluttered Enrique. "Very impolite, indeed, and with a naughty mind!"

"I beg of you, friend," called the padre, "go on with your antics, never minding the future."

"Antics, indeed!" pouted Enrique. "Do you call *this* an antic?" And he began to waltz about the stage, first one arm in the air and then the other, and then both, with his little red cap for a tambourine, so that the racket renewed itself and grew so loud that he stopped, abruptly, and with a very injured look.

"There!" he said. "I am tired, and you do not know how to take it! I want my money now!" He handed down the little jingling cap. "Will the kind padre take it about for me? Then there will be fair play. I thank your worship." He tilted his head and raised his heavy brows. "I am, indeed, too tired myself." And he fanned himself with a slow, hamish hand, looking quite sullen all the while the cap was being passed.

But at the weight and shine of it when he got it back, his great face broke into a smile as glittering as the money.

"Now, now, you are too kind to poor Enrique! But I will reward you! You have yet to see my wife! Indeed, you may not well afford to hold your breath until she comes, for you will hold it, all of you, perforce, when she appears. Mark you now, I go to fetch the blind beauty."

He bounded from the stage into the darkness.

Completely wearied by laughing, the audience sighed happily. The Terassan trio tinkled languidly. The leaves of the great planetas stirred with a breeze from the mountains, the people with a sense of pleasurable expectation—as in a waking dream, for at the feet of the

big mountebank to-night they had been living with Romance. As his rendering of the stage had lent the last point of it to their village green, to them the man himself had been Romance itself. All regretful thoughts of festive wine and all the discords of "The Rapine of Eros" were fully gone from them at last.

"Our problem of discontent is over," thought the padre; and he said to Rosa, "I have seldom been more happy."

Theodore, leaning still against his tree trunk in the semidark, began to laugh. The snatches of daring thought, youthful and extravagant, that had been plaguing him for hours seemed to have lifted, in the cool night quiet, from his mind.

It was a moment apt for Destiny to strike, and she struck with the power and the awful beauty of lightning—aiming ruthlessly at a whole town to find one heart.

The breeze stealing through the chasm rustled the pale-yellow canopy and the delicate fall of wistaria color. From behind this, Enrique's big fist appeared, and something curved through the air. It burst above the crowd, and a glimmering host of little goldfishes sailed about and descended in a fluttering shower. The stage was forgotten. The little boys, with high whoops, poured about among the grown folk. The little flying fishes were of sensitive gilt paper that squirmed at the touch.

"Doradillas! Doradillas!" screamed the thirty.

It had not occurred to Terassa until now that the name meant "Little Golden Fish" as well as "Golden-head."

So hotfoot was the scramble that the moment spread into full seconds before the people knew that there was a presence among them—behind them, now before them, as they gradually turned and fell silent. It was that presence which is, first of all, God's most glit-

tering achievement, last of all, Fate's sharpest instrument—a woman.

The people had not known what they had expected. They had not thought. When she had stood before them at the top of the highway, in broad daylight, they had caught their breath at her loveliness, and, despite Enrique's warning—or perhaps, human-naturewise, because of it—they had not expected to hold their breath again. Yet they were holding it now, in a tense silence. After he had left them, with his last loud emphasis on the pretty phrase, "blind beauty," unwittingly their minds had dwelt through the interim upon the "blind." This was the kernel of their interest. Her beauty they would have supposed they had already seen.

And they were unconscious, even in their now total hush, of the one sound that greeted her—a sharp, helpless cry of wonder and pain that came, half choking, out of the darkness behind them—so dazed were they all at the electric splendor before them, so spell-bound by the fact of such a thing's living, of its breathing, delicately as the primrose canopy over it, as the wistaria-tinted curtain back of it, in their actual sight. They felt, but could not know, that it was Doradilla.

CHAPTER XII.

Climaxing the rustling vista of snake-skinned sycamores, the spirit, the soul, of the dreamlike version of the ramblas, stood the beauty, a creature that no one, not Terassa, not Enrique even, had ever seen before.

Her gown, clinging and drooping around the exquisite lines of her tall figure and trailing behind her in a fashion that dared to-day with yesterday, was a rose color that in itself was more than rose, almost more than flame; like a visionary's dream of the color of the heart of Venus in the heart of the primrose and wistaria wave, it was a soft,

a shining, dull and brilliant pink that might have been a flower made of embers, a rose suggesting hell in a heavenly humor.

From out of this shimmering glow, the ravishing naked shoulders and breast and throat rose a wonderful ivory. Above this ivory, the chiseled face looked white as paper. The dully glittering gold hair was piled high, intricately wound into a form part Spanish, part classical. The rounded arms, upraised a little toward the people, were covered by gloves of heavy cloth of gold.

As in the metamorphosis of the green, here, upon the woman, too, the subtle god in the monster had triumphed, despite his brazen display of her ivory body. The delicate lights, the canopy, the curtain, the dim trees, were the flowers with which he had decked her. Not a blossom marred the bold simplicity of the roseate frock.

In the hush that still smothered the audience, a voice like a thread of silver came from the statue of rose and gold and ivory:

"Friends, life changes every half hour!"

Then she stooped to a little basket at her side, and in another moment the cheering people were lost in the hypnosis of her madly dancing little spheres, which fled up and down among their lighted counterparts overhead—lavender, green and violet, red and yellow, rose color, robin's-egg blue.

To the hearts of the whole people, as Enrique was Romance, she, in beauty and allure, in accouterment, in actual essence, even to her own use of the word itself, was Life. Awake, they were dreaming—which is life to Spaniards. They felt, though they did not ponder, the vanquishing power that held them, the thing that, for all her garb and air and posture, she still was, as she had been it in the ramblas—pure beauty, the pale beauty of purity. It

shone victorious out of the bright modernity, the bizarre sophistication, of her gown and hair, like a diamond set in pink-and-gilt rococo.

But to the lonely boy back of them in the shadows of the sycamores had been granted the sole finding of a still deeper secret in the magical appearance of the beauty. Not a Terassan knew what the American had instantly known—that with all the snowy calm of her exquisite, staring face, as she had evolved before them through her shower of gold fish, this Spanish woman, Doradilla, had silently dared them with a purpose that filled her soul and quivered through every nerve of her lovely person—a purpose beyond their knowing, and beyond his. He had found the secret, but he could not read it.

His cry had wrenched from him not because of this alone. It had had a dozen inceptions; it had been, in a sense, like that of a drowning man. He had been standing there, torn between whim and the ache of solitude, homesick solitude, and out of the soil of this alien land, his manhood's last home, the flaming heart of a woman had leaped up in his sight to eat away the memory and love and pain of his boyhood's first home.

The strike of the dart of the afternoon, a thing of pin prick, of laughter, had yet inoculated him with the chance of sadness. After happy, haphazard months in the little foreign hill town, it had brought him his first bitter taste of intrinsic difference from the people whom, suddenly, in the same moment, he had discovered that he loved. From toe to neck, the clothes that he had brushed and ironed for a blind woman's sake were out of Barcelona shops, but they did not make him Spanish. And why should he wish to be Spanish?

His thoughts had whirled. Would he, for any woman the globe around, be that olive-faced thing that knows no

law but the dictates of its own passion—the dago with a dagger? Would he swindle even so much as the briefest smile of a wife from a poor, innocent Catholic monster? Yet—yet—Then the scene of weird trees distorted into phantasms around the great opal of the stage would redouble its strangeness for him; make him, for still a new lonely moment, an alien among the gayly garbed, chattering peasants, her countrymen; make him a ghost at the edge of the colorful beauty that was theirs.

It was in one of these moments that, through the twisting golden shower, she had come.

Confident of himself, laughing at himself, this afternoon he had played with the white fire of the daylight girl. Now it was night, and the pink fire of the night had struck to his quick, as the silver flare of the ramblas had struck, unknown to him, to the roots of the sycamore.

Was he a *man*? Yes; twenty-one—and a week!

Was he a man of *honor*? For answer, the dream of the spellbound people closed itself about him again, and he saw her and the dancing spheres in the dancing light as a small, alive picture close to his eyes, while the din of the foreign place came to him as if from far away, as if it were the faint roaring of water.

Yet, to him, the magic thing was not a dream. It was chimera, a double thing—of dream and of nightmare. As, to Terassa, this man and this woman were Romance and Life, to the American they were those other two, dream and nightmare side by side, incongruous, indissoluble—the woman his own romance, his life; the man, a horror.

He tried to laugh again—at his words to the padre: "She must be the darkest, the blackest-eyed, blackest-haired." And look at her—the pallor, the strange gold, the blue-hyacinth eyes! "The

most Spanish Spaniard, the angriest!" She was cool, mild as—as a Dane! "The deepest trickstress of them all!" And, at the pathos of her pretty juggling, a lump came into his hardened professional throat.

Then the whirligig of his thoughts raced back to that instant of her appearance and his forthright cry, and, instead of the contraction in his throat, there was a little gasp there. In that instant, and thereafter until she had stooped down for her little spheres, her great staring eyes had seemed to be fastened upon him, far away as he was. They had seemed to stare straight over the whole people, fastened not upon his, but just above them, upon his forehead, as if she were reading his thoughts, as he had felt them to be in the sunlight, in the highway, in the afternoon.

Could he make *her* feel *him*? Had she felt him there, gazing back at her? If a man threw the *whole* of his love into his face, could a woman read it, and would she believe it, first sight or not, husband or not, honor or not?

First sight! The irony of it cut across his mind and heart, and he laughed. Yet—the laugh had been from the mind. The heart asked, *could the blind read the soul?*

He realized suddenly the increased excitement of the audience—their movement as well as their noise. Her trick had changed.

She was tossing the little globes out into the audience and catching them again. All pathos had gone from the performance of the trickstress. He instinctively whistled at the amazing feat of it. The place had gone wild.

"Is it not wonderful, Rosa?" cried the delighted padre.

"They are simple enough tricks," exclaimed Rosa crossly. "We have seen the like before, and I could do them myself, with practice."

"*I call it wonder!*" insisted Padre Pedro. "The tricks, I admit, are sim-

ple in themselves, but they are marvels of daring and dexterity for a blind performer!"

"They are not as dexterous as her gown!" sniffed Rosa.

Enrique was now upon the stage again, only two paces off from her, watching her as if over the tub's edge of a private bath of satisfaction. In his beaming eyes, the dancing, colored jewels were money-hued, gold and silver. They would turn to it presently. Indeed, even now coins flew to her white hands—and did not fly back like the little spheres.

Through the soft darkness and glitter, the priest's happy voice floated to the trembling American, and it seemed to ring on in his ears in laughing words from long ago: "You are a wilder Don Quixote than we kind hearts opposite the United States! I will *pray* for it, Tédi. *I will pray that the lady shall come to Terassa!*"

He came suddenly forward out of the darkness.

Trembling with the thrill of delicious wrongdoing, he stepped nearer the rose-colored flame.

CHAPTER XIII.

Leaping with a strength as graceful as that of the flaring torchlights among which he had come, he caught one of the little spheres. It was the one of robin's-egg blue.

All seven were flying through the air again; again, because Terassan money, plentiful as it was this prosperous year, had its boundaries, and when its shower had gradually subsided like that of her little goldfishes, she had ceased her fire. But it had been only for a natural, infectious instant; almost immediately she had stooped again to her basket—to Enrique's annoyance. He had expected her to stop when the money did; but, smiling to the cries of "More! More!" and heedless

of his protest—though she had flinched and flushed at it—she had sent the little globes respinning.

One, swifter, straighter than any other, had sped over the center of the audience toward the tree under which the impulsive American had been standing. Jumping, he had caught it mid-way in its journey.

Had she *felt* him nearing her? Was that why the pliant creature had ventured to disobey her husband's signal?

He caught another. And another. Another. The green, the violet, the lavender. Five. And six. The Spanish colors, red and yellow. She had kept back the seventh in her hand.

"*Pelota!*" screamed the little boys. "*Pelota!*" For, with a backward stagger and a shot of his sinuous arm, he had caught the swift little globe of rose color.

"*Pelota! Pelota! Pelota!*" And the sport-thirsty thirty spun around like the flying globes, in their frenzy to see both Teddy and the golden poll at once.

Even Enrique beamed, stopping his sulks at the din of popular delight, as the foreigner captured and tossed and returned the shining jewels. And, in his swifter and swifter play, he gradually shortened the distance between himself and the blind woman—step by step moving closer to the stage.

"*Pelota*, indeed!" grumbled Rosa. "I admit it looks like it. We will be having female bullfighters presently—cow-punchers, they call them in the United States, where women do everything!"

She was speaking to the padre, and, seeing he did not heed her, she nudged him with brusque violence.

"Do you notice the poor moth from America?"

The emphasis of her elbow so took him up from that of her words that he did not catch her meaning, but he vaguely knew she referred to the electrical Theodore, and he went impulsively over to the boy.

"So, Tédi," he affectionately exclaimed, "you are giving a performance for my people, after all! You are finer than I have ever seen you, and I am glad!"

But, as he had failed to answer Rosa, so Tédi failed to answer him. He now seemed almost to be dancing with the hot, tinted fire of the little globes; and for a moment the fond priest forgot all his gay surroundings in a surprised study of the boy's face. It seemed to him inspired. Its handsome boyish lines seemed to have set like a cameo in the power of some inner light, which concentrated in his bright gray eyes. The padre had never before seen the whimsical foreigner look so happy—or so old. He turned away, hurt a little that, in his moment of joyous abandon, his young friend had not thrown even one word to him between his dancing toys; but he rejoiced in the boy's pleasure, none the less, and in the next moment forgot his pique in new marvel at what the queer beauty was achieving.

If Theodore was extraordinary, what word was she? By what terrific gift of lightning divination, he asked himself—and, indeed, the whole crowd, when it could lift its thoughts from her beauty, was asking, too—did she catch those seventy-times-seven darts of whizzing color?

Teddy was actually dancing now—not because of the rapidity and height of the globes, but deliberately. For his purpose, he had slackened the fire, and, with his look fastened on the roseate golden poll, he went more and more slowly, every gesture more delicate, every bodily motion more graceful, as they became more slow, nearer and nearer the presence that had become a fixed, shimmering pink flame in his fixed gray eyes.

He was not a man in a dream. He was a man living—keenly, thrillingly. What he danced in was magic, not phantasy, life, not thought. In the ego

of ecstasy, his imaginative adventurer's mind told him that he was dancing among the spheres, tossing them to their own music. With the seven round colors tossing forth and back in less and less spreading arcs between them, he was dancing toward the stage as gravely, yet joyously, as devotionally, as the juggler of Notre Dame danced for the Madonna.

Padre Pedro, queerly thrilled at the religion of it—and mysteriously shocked, too, without knowing why—yet found himself suddenly cheering with the crowd.

Coins had begun again to fly to the beauty, and some one scaled a bright silver piece to Teddy. It was Juanita, who had flung it with the trenchant cry: "*I can at least see your performance, mi Têodoro!*" And several other of the more prosperous Terassan ladies followed her tasteless example.

But he paid no deference to the fact of their sex, and sped their silver on to the rose beauty in the torchlight. He wondered if she had noted his name as it came from Juanita's lips. He could have choked Juanita for turning it Spanish; he wanted the inexplicable advantage of the foreign in this foreign woman's eyes.

No man dances but to music, and Teddy was dancing to music as well as to fire. His tune was a persistent fragment of "*The Mysteries of the Heart*," which had leaped into his head and sung there to the exact measure of her silver thread of a voice ever since the gold-and-ivory statue had spoken: "*Life changes every half hour! Life changes every half hour!*"

Could he change life—his, hers, the monster's—in a half hour? But he hurled the nightmare half of the chimera out through the pink fire of his mind, leaving life only *his, hers*, in that ignited place.

He found himself fallen forward, din

raging in his ears, against the edge of the platform, his elbows upon it, his exhausted hands empty. The little magic spheres were neatly in the basket at her feet. The noise about him seemed to be receding, yet the little boys, who were making so big a share of it, were swarming past him up to the stage. The weird *pelota* game—their game, his, hers—was over. Once more her trick had changed. Life had not changed yet. He felt himself once more a drowning man. In a half instant, the whole scene had changed its nature. Holding Enrique's great, fat hand, she had turned to her readings of color. The intoxicated American stood at her feet, forgotten by the crowd, further below her than her neglected little spheres. He could hear the noise of her new sensation like a vortex around him—the cries, the clamor for places. The confusion of sounds was as poignantly sweet in its riot as the whirl of colors in his dazzled thoughts—violet, red, and turquoise. Yellow—was it the canopy? Lavender—was it the curtain? Green—was it the trees? Rose color— Among them all threaded the silver of her voice.

"Friends, dear friends, I beseech you, let me choose my first customer! Indeed, should it not be your gentle priest? Come, padre, I can feel you—you are a tall figure in black!"

"There is nothing remarkable in that!" cried Rosa. "Every priest dresses in black!"

"Did I not point him out, though, friend?" she answered. "And I am going to tell you the color of his eyes. Here, padre, give me your hands. Now—your eyes are—" There was a long pause before she named the color. As he gazed down into the pure loveliness of her uplifted face, a dampness crept into the eyes she seemed to think she was studying, for he saw, now, as Teddy had long ago seen, how her great, hyacinth-colored ones looked al-

ways just too high—just missing the sympathetic looks that sought her.

At last, the silver voice said tenderly: "Blue—Mediterranean blue!"

The sad longing in the delicately articulated phrase caught all the hearts in Terrassa that loved those eyes, and there were snuffles from various feminine directions and cheers from the little boys.

"Kind, kind eyes!" she continued. "But grave! Are they *too* grave? Can they be severe? Has the black gown shadowed them? I fear black! A man of book learning told me once that it was the absence of color. Alas, it is, indeed, the color of my blindness! I love colors. Indeed, are you sometimes too severe, my padre?"

"Come, come! A man of book learning, indeed!" exclaimed Enrique. "Could you not say right out he was your husband? It was I told you that about black, Doradilla."

It had been the marqués who had told her, and Enrique's voice was doleful.

"*Why does she fear the padre?*" cried Theodore's whirling mind.

It was turn-about to-night in small matters of neglect and oversight. So startled was the gentle-hearted padre at the fair girl's suggestion that he could be too harsh that, as Teddy had lately left him without a reply, so he had now left her, without the courteous speech that had lain ready on his tongue—indeed, without a word, and the utmost picture, in his surprised looks, of what she had hinted. He promptly thought of going back, but not promptly enough, for she was swiftly dealing with the little boys.

"Brown. Hazel. Deep, *such* deep brown!"

"A mole could manage that!" exclaimed Rosa, from among them. "Almost every two Spanish eyes are brown, of some shade or other! Come, here is your money—are *mine* brown?"

She and Inés, from the first moment of onslaught for the color readings, had been struggling for places ahead of the little boys, regardless of all leniency for their tender years, Inés from sheer lack of manners, and Rosa from the possession of sheer bad ones. They were now next the beauty, Inés predominating. Inés was a character of two istics—arrogant to those who feared her and humble to those she feared or of other importance.

"Your highness," she said, bowing and bowing before Doradilla, "I am a very poor woman, and all I have left to-night in my widowhood, out of three whole husbands who adored me, is two reales, or twenty centimos. But because this friend of mine, here, has had me in a fearful box, not to say pounding on one, for a week—getting my nature misunderstood by the padre, who is, as you say, altogether too severe at times—I will give your highness the half of my poor fortune, that is, ten centimos, if, with your powers of divination, you will kindly tell me whether I am damned."

"My friend," said Doradilla, "my fortune-telling is for to-morrow night, and perhaps by then you may have found out for yourself, between yourself and God, or your good priest. But as a sop for keeping you in suspense, if you make it suspense, I will read your eyes for nothing. God meant them for brown. But, friend, are they not a little green at times?"

"She will be damned indeed, if she is so stingy as to accept your extravagant offer, Doradilla!" ejaculated Enrique, and Inés screamed with horror at his dread combination of words and face. But Rosa shoved her out of the way, thus saving her, without intending to, the real she had started to throw down in her panic.

Doradilla took Rosa's old hands and smiled up at her.

"No, your eyes are *not* brown. They, too, were meant to be, but they are as black as two coals, snapping coals! Yet they are eyes whose friendship I would trust almost with my life."

"Well, well, do not count too much upon me," said Rosa, "for I am a very subtle and erratic character. But I will say this much—that you are an astounding trickstress. Nor do I mean that as one of my subtleties, either, as I will prove to you by telling you straight out that you have beauty—to-night, almost too much of it."

"Yes, yes!" said Enrique proudly. "And this, Doradilla, is an old woman who was very rude to me. Look here, you, have you not something nice to say to *me*?"

"Well, well," answered Rosa, "I can say in all honesty I admired your megaphone. It gave profound tones to your grating voice, and was a clever thought. If I ever undertake to manage theatricals, I shall make one like it."

"Well, now, now, who is next?" said Enrique crossly.

"*Why does she want Rosa's friendship?*" demanded Theodore's racing thoughts. The question even sprang to his lips, for Rosa had approached him, but she was full of her own annotations.

"I do not believe," she said, "that she is even Danish. I believe she is from Ireland. I am acute at languages, and, let me tell you, 'Dora' is one Irish name and 'Delia' is another. Murder can out, you know, through a character's puns."

"We are next, we, we!" the forgotten little boys were crying, but Doradilla lifted her white hands in a flutter of dismay.

"Mañana, my dears, mañana!" she cried. "Alas, Enrique, there are so many of them! To-morrow, children, all of you, along with your fortunes, too, every one! But you, friend! Indeed, I have been waiting for you!"

It was Simpatica, who had been secretly supplying the little boys with coins as she stood near by studying the lovely woman.

"I—you have been waiting for *me*?" she asked, pleased and startled.

Doradilla laughed, and the boy, gazing up at her, thrilled at the pure, light silver of her first sound of gayety.

"Yes. Yes. You are the parrot woman!"

"How do you know that?" gasped Simpatica.

"I felt you this afternoon. More than any other color, I feel pink. Can you not know that from my frock? It is the most keen of colors. You had got on a pink cloak. I asked my husband. You are not wearing it to-night. He said the little green sparks that fled up from you were parrots. And your eyes are green. Not like the amusing old woman's just now. A lovely blue-green gray. I love *gray*! Why is your husband not with you to have a reading?"

"My—husband?" faltered Simpatica. "You—cannot—one so charming—be making—fun of me, my friend? I have no husband!"

"Ah!" said Doradilla. "Some one in pink stood beside you—very close to you. The blind have only their pretty thoughts to live with—the color coupled you in my poor, dark mind!"

Trembling from head to foot, choking back a cry in his throat, the listening boy crept to the end of the platform—around it—to the back, the steps. As he reached the top and caught sight of the beaming, looming Enrique, a loathing thrill of the chimera seized him. But he drowned both this and his quivering with a sudden rush of his smile and his voice and his posture into the debonair.

"Doña Señora," he said, doffing his cap and sweeping it to the boards in Enrique's own bow, "money has passed

between you and me before this to-night, but that was in the *pelota*. It must not pass again from one so low to one so high. For your reading of my eyes, I beg to pay your handsome—giant!"

And, with a grace as swift as his shudder away from the word "husband" to the one he had seized, and a toss of actual gold that doubled the silver of Enrique's eyes, he deliberately threw himself at her feet; and, with an elbow propped on her chair, looked up into the staring eyes of hyacinth.

"Now, now!" cried Enrique, stepping forward. "You deserve a reward for that, I declare you do, caballero! Your generosity is by far the greatest of the night! Now, I shall let you see my wife, who cannot even see herself, poor thing, in the full of her glory! Now, what do you think of *that*?"

And he reached over her shoulder and planted a huge red rose in the bosom of her pink dress.

"Enrique—beloved!" she whispered, lifting back her head so that it rested against him and raising the red flower to her lips.

"Come, come, make haste, and read the kind gentleman's eyes for him," said Enrique, stepping back.

"Your eyes are difficult to read, my friend," she murmured. "Mind you, the character, though not the color, I read partly by touch. Give me your hand."

With the flower still in her own, she clasped his fingers, and, as she held them and the blossom, he let them tremble about the stem.

"Well, well," she said at last, with a little sigh, "from the character of your hand, I would have supposed them of another color. Your eyes are black."

A weight of crushing, weakening disappointment came upon him, but as he gazed at the lovely blue eyes that

did not quite meet his, he could not contradict her. He could have sworn that once—just once and for a diminutive point of time—as he had first looked up at her in his wildly-daring posture, they had stared straight into his—and straight on into his soul. The disappointment—her first failure of the night, for *him!*—was heart sickening.

"So pink is your color—your favorite, your *simpatico*?" he whispered.

"Do you not think so, caballero?" she laughed, putting one white hand on the bosom of her gown. Her other hand still clasped his fingers.

"No!" he cried, filled with sudden, buoyant daring again by the silver thrill of her laugh. "Your color is the combination of all colors! Do not deny it, for it is that! I will have it so! I have seen you to-night—you have not seen yourself—centering them all, like a jewel! Yes, it is all of them, your color, all of them together!"

"And, in God's name, what would such a thing be, señor?" she exclaimed.

"Do you not know?" he cried. "You knew the name for the absence of all colors. Has your—your giant of learning never told you the combination, then? It is white—white, white! It is the color of your beauty, which is the color of the diamond and of snow! You should wear only white flowers. I see you among them, señorita! I see you only among them! I see you *at the altar*, among white flowers only!"

She tried to draw away her hand, but his was now the one that clasped.

"This is strange, strange, señor! Indeed, you show a strange vigor of speech for the character that I had read in this hand of yours. Enrique, do you see I still hold the caballero's hand? Yet not until this instant have I been sure of its character, beloved."

"And what is that character?" de-

manded Theodore passionately. "What is it?"

"Ah," she cried, "though your eyes, señor, are black, so very black, it is— is irresolute, señor! You have not loved enough. Not as Spaniards love—for I can tell you are a foreigner; the simplest blind would see that. When—when you have known the meaning of love—as—as I know it, as I know it, caballero—you may be resolute—some day! No, no, Enrique?"

She laughed again her glittering, silver laugh, and turned, with an exquisite gesture of her free hand, to her giant.

"I am tired, my husband."

And Theodore laughed, too—a laugh that rang with as brittle a gayety as hers.

"Foreigner or not," he cried, springing to his feet, "let me tell you I do know its meaning. Let me tell you your *simpatico* color is not pink, but white; that as your color is white, mine is gray. Yes, gray, I tell you, as I tell you I am resolute."

"But my people, my people," they heard the padre's coaxing voice, "the lady is tired. I heard her say so. There will be no more to-night, I am sure of it."

Again she drew back her captured hand, bringing the flower with it to her lips. And his whole body thrilled as her kiss—as the look of the great hyacinth eyes slipped to his forehead again—missed the rich blossom, and, for a fraction of instant, grazed his fingers. He fetched them, with the red flower, away from her convulsively toward his heart.

"Now, now!" said Enrique, stepping toward him indignantly. "What do you mean, trying to take my flower away? That is my own flower that I put on my own wife, and there you were trying to take it!"

The padre was mounting the steps to the platform.

"Good friends," he said, reaching a hearty hand to each of the mountebanks, "you have brought white magic to my little town in a gray hour. Let me say half hour, for the sake of your wife's attractive word. You have made my people happy. Let them all hear what I say, for in their name—Terrassa's—I am thanking you. And to you let me say, my friend, that to me the actual magic of your lovely wife is manifest less in her charming tricks—yes, less manifest in even her wonderful divinations of color through touch or whatnot—than in her wielding of an influence for good, for inspiration—in her pretty power of intimacy with my folk. While you, too, we have much enjoyed, my friend. God be with you!"

"I thank you, I thank you, your worship and your honor!" said Enrique, beaming and bowing. "And, indeed, I have a benevolence yet for your thirty little boys and all your good, kind folk. It is a happy dream of their dear giant, to give them happy dreams."

He hurled something over the primrose canopy, and above the shifting crowd burst a shoal of squirming, showering little silver fish. The little boys and the last riotous din of the night broke loose together. Holding the torches that they had plucked up from the green, they ran through the silver glitter. The noise flickered and died with the lights. Chatter and flare sank together in all directions, as in highway and alley and street they doused the torches.

In the darkness of the nearly empty square, Teddy leaned heavily against the tree that had sheltered him a half hour ago. Life had changed in the half hour. But, he asked himself, had *he* changed, changed completely? He found his eyes going again and again and again across the square toward the little shop.

"Are you," he asked himself, "are you a *sneak*?"

CHAPTER XIV.

In the little shop, Enrique was smiling at Doradilla and gulping down a quart and a pint of wine in mouthfuls that made him look, before he swallowed each one, like an enormous child asking its mother for French kisses. And, between these distensive pleasures, he made rapturous exclamations to the beautiful, weary trickstress.

"Indeed, I admit you were wonderful, little Golden-head! I am proud of you! Come, I will help you to take off our fine pink dress. Yes, I will, poor blind, helpless creature! Shall you now say ever again that I do not prize you?"

She looked at him over her shoulder, as she struggled with the hooks of the gown, and there were tears in the great hyacinth eyes.

"Beloved! Never! Never!"

The bodice loosened suddenly, and one of its golden straps slipped down the ivory contours of an arm.

"Did I not tell you I would help you, Doradilla?"

He stepped up behind her and caught her roughly.

"There—it is off you! You went and made me tear it, but I will be good natured about it. I am going to be kind to you to-night. Is it not too cold for you to sleep outdoors, poor little blind girl?"

She leaned weakly against him, her breath coming in little gasps.

"Were you not right at first, beloved? Might there not be—eavesdroppers? Alas, why are we not far away to-night, in the mountains?"

"Yes, yes, I was right at first," said Enrique. "I am always right." And he walked off from her so abruptly that she almost fell.

She caught his hand, with a stifled cry.

"But you—you will be kind to me, my darling? I—I am doing well? You are proud of me?"

"Yes, yes, well enough," said Enrique. "But, mind you this, Doradilla! It was a fine thing, your coquetting as you did. It brings good humor and money. But, mind you, do not mortify me by going too far—as you did with the American, I think, holding his fingers as long as you did! I came near to pinching you once or twice. Mind you that, Doradilla!"

She looked up at him with a curious smile, and, as he frowned down into her staring, lifted eyes, the subtlety playing on her lovely lips seemed to creep into their look—their first hint of expression in all her days of tragedy.

"So?" she whispered, with a silvery laugh. "So I have made you jealous, have I, Enrique? I have made you jealous! Enrique, do not forget what I said to you before the performance to-night, what I said to you by the fire in front of the little house in the mountains. I said I would—would *make* you— Never mind! I have already made you something—I have made you jealous!"

Before they left the little shop, to lie down on their hospitable mound of gay pillows under the big planeta, a shadow had slipped across the green and was standing in the dim light of the fonda. Another shadow slipped likewise across the green and came up behind it, and it started violently as a thin, sharp finger rapped it on the shoulder.

"Young man," said Rosa, "if you wish to be a villain with success, take more care of your features in public."

"What—what do you mean, Rosa?" stammered Teddy.

"Come, come!" said Rosa. "Because the girl is blind, and most of Terassa, too, you need not think that I am."

CHAPTER XV.

The padre was sinking happily to his knees, gratefully confident that to-night "The Mysteries of the Heart" would not prevent his prayers, when a fierce, discordant pounding at his door, hectic, as if projected from a pounding heart, reverberated through his house.

He hastened downstairs.

"Tédi—my friend! What is it?"

"It is the cathedral spire, padre, with the woman on it!" And the boy leaned against the doorframe and laughed.

"Are you moonstruck?" cried the bewildered priest.

"Yes, padre!"

He was certainly as pale as the late moonlight that had just now bathed the Chasm Road, and the priest, in his growing anxiety, noted only the deep, disturbing change in him, without an inkling of the mad drift of his words.

"What is your trouble, Téodor?"

"Much trouble, padre! Happy trouble!" He stopped laughing and looked squarely into the priest's eyes. "Padre, your first prayer is answered!"

Light flooded the padre's mind as fully and suddenly as it had flooded their two odd figures, the boy in his garish Spanish city clothes, the priest in his big cotton nightgown.

"But—but, Téodor," he stammered, "even before you had seen this woman's face—that poor blind face—you knew that she was married!"

Then, through a long moment, his ears ringing with the hysterical, contemptuous laughter that helplessly answered his words, he studied the metamorphosis of the boy.

Theodore was no longer twenty-one, or twenty-one and a week. He was the ageless thing of abrupt maturity that impulse and its sudden knowledge make of a masculine being. In place of the downright beauty that lifts a woman above caste, that had snatched Doradilla from her peasant regimen and that

could make her anything she chose—and that never does anything of the sort for a man even if he has it—Theodore, in his shining eyes, in the determined expression of his lips, in his very hands as they fidgeted at his sides, displayed now the savage truthfulness of emotion that carries his sex through fire from the gutter of life to its roof.

In this youth before him, now a creature of flame with a hint of ashes, the trembling old Spanish father saw no longer the flotsam of the circus, but only a classless, nationless soul that had set a scorching match to mind and body, and in his terrified affection he cried out instinctively of the one medicine known to his creed.

"We will overcome this, Téodor! I believe you, believe that you know yourself, or I would try to laugh it away! We all suffer, at God's will! You will live—and soon—to be glad that you so suffered!"

But he had not discerned the whole metamorphosis.

"I am not suffering!" And the American's words swept out in a rush of swift, hot, ungrammatical Spanish that heeded nothing but its desperate purpose. "I did not come to you to confess—though to have her I will answer your prayer of every day since I came here, and be a Catholic for you. I came to you for help, not comfort. How am I to have her? How? How? You know your people, you know your religion. Well, must I murder him, or will he be sensible?"

"My boy! My friend!" gasped the padre.

"Or must I filch her and run? And how? You did this, padre! It was your prayer—you would pray it! Now that you have your answer, you must help me. But how?"

"God in heaven!" cried the horrified padre, and he shrank back a step farther. "Life has rudely answered my prayer to Thee, my Father!"

"You have repeated that prayer to me, word for word!" cried the boy. "You prayed she should be a *good* woman. *Is* she that? Only look once at her! So what have you to complain of? Your own God has answered you! No? No? No?"

"Alas!" cried the tortured priest. "Dear as you are to me, Téodor, I could wish now I had let you go that day!"

"Do you *ask* me to go?" cried Theodore.

"My son!" choked the priest.

"It was your prayer, yours!"

As the priest had dragged the boy by the wrist to the edge of the road that day, Theodore now dragged him.

"It was here that you did it, here that you pointed at the storm, here that you promised it! Do you go back upon it now—now that it has come? She is the woman, as I have always seen her, as I told you it was to be—she on the stage, with me in the audience; and the way I was to have told her, with my eyes, is a pretty means to an end with a blind girl! Use your wits for me—your *Spanish wits, on a Spanish matter!* It is your turn! Well, *how?*"

The priest found himself wishing that Teddy were a Spaniard! The momentary storm, in that case, would be worse, even blinder to right, more consciously willing to wrong; but he would know familiarly all its elements, confidently act without fear for the issue. But with this cool American turned hot Latin, the frightened priest was rudderless, untutored. His mind plunged desperately for the nearest weapon in his thoughts, and this, fatally, was the one he had so long neglected among his own people—authority.

"Téodor," he exclaimed, "respect yourself! And until you *are* yourself—which I devoutly hope will be with daylight—respect *me!* In your trouble, if this is unhappily deep enough to be one, be, I beg of you, the friend that

I have loved. I will have no rash wickedness even *talked* of in my town! Remember that! I have said."

Theodore met his look for a brief, steady instant.

"Make me the favor," he said, in a bitter flash of courteous, pure Castilian, "not to say any more prayers for *me*, my father!"

Then he turned crisply, without a further syllable, and walked down the Chasm Road.

He felt hopelessly an alien again, helplessly friendless. He had only the parrot woman now to turn to, and it was the dead of night. He, of all Terassa—if he was of Terassa any longer!—had keenest reason to understand the name the town had given her—Simpatica. She had helped him, nobly, once before, thereby making herself, to boot, the prologue of his Spanish history. They had traveled through hell in a circus tent together. Yet right there, at this moment, the trouble lay. The morale of the circus code outrivals court and kindergarten both, and this young man, whose heart and soul plotted the filching of a neighbor's wife, hung fire, abashed, at the crime of knocking at his friend's door at a witching hour.

But, as he reached the entrance of the Chasm Road, he saw a yellow oblong shining out into the moonlight, and, with a grateful cry at what he thought the accidental providence of it, he ran swiftly down the highway.

"I thought you would come to me," she said quietly, and she fetched him by the hand into her little whitewashed house and softly closed the door.

"You—you *know?*" he stammered.

"Was I not at her side, Theodore, when you threw yourself at her feet? Juanita knew. Fortunately, at the next foreign head, or blond one, she will be cured of you. But could *any one* who loved you, and who saw you, *not* know? Except the padre—dear innocent! And,

above everything, Theodore, fight it out alone! For *he* loves you as no one else does—even I—and this would hurt him to the quick. Do not tell him, Theodore!"

"The fat is already in the fire there, Simpatica. I see my mistake now. He sent me away, horrified. He would not help me."

"*Help* you?" she cried, catching the bright shine of his gray eyes. "What kind of help do you mean? The padre—Padre Pedro—*help* you—to do wrong? And how? Oh, even if you are quite mad, *how*, Theodore?"

"That is what I asked him—how, *how*?"

"My dear, my dear boy friend!" she cried. "I thought you would come to me—and to him, if you went to him at all—for what we *could* give, the thing that these dear people name me for—*sympathy*! And I understand, oh, I understand, dear boy! These whirlwind things are a necessary part of life. But even if what you think of as a miracle—this thing that has come to you—had come to her, too? What then, but turmoil and wrong and pain? And can you think that to this blind girl, wonder of divination though she is, there exists so much as a *hint* of your miracle? Indeed, she flirted with you. But can you not see what the whole town has seen—the thing that luckily kept them as blind as she to *your* state, Theodore—that she *dotes* on her monstrous husband? Have you a *ghost* of reason to think otherwise?"

"No, not a ghost!" he exclaimed bitterly. "I was an eavesdropper to-night, Simpatica. I listened to them at the little shop."

"*Theodore!*" she cried, a wound like the padre's in her voice.

"I heard her *tell* him that it was to make him jealous! But what is *reason*? What right has that brute to her?"

"The right of her love for him," said

Simpatica simply. "Brute or not, she adores him. Every magical gesture of her trickery is inspired by that love."

"Oh, Simpatica, *Simpatica!*" he cried, and he turned upon her so desperately, his voice so fierce a cry, that all her little love birds, which had been fast asleep, flew with a whirl out of their cage and swirled protectingly about her. "I see no reason, no anything, in this—this circus to-night, except that from somewhere, whether she adores him or not, *there is a shadow on that woman—a shadow worse than her blindness! And I want to take her out of it!*"

"Theodore—dear, dear friend of mine," said Simpatica gravely, slowly, "*in the depth of your own mind*, is this thing right or wrong, and, wrong or right, is there a *gleam* of hope in it *anywhere?*"

He stood for a long time with his head lowered, while the gray shadows of the little green love birds made a whirlpool of the white walls and the floor.

"No," he said at last quietly.

There was silence between them for a space as they continued to stand, he with his head still bent, she watching him, with her hands instinctively clasped, their bodies and faces patterned with flashing gray wings.

"You can make this big or little, Theodore. At littlest, you must suffer. A word, for instance, is a little thing. You know my own story, Theodore—her word 'husband' to me to-night was a little thing, but for a little I suffered! Theodore, for a cause you yourself call hopeless, will you, the foreigner whose country prides itself on an honor keener than Europe's, make a big shadow—and a permanent, not a fleeting, one—on the big heart that has fathered you in Terassa?"

As he looked at her, his virile, blond face was as white as Doradilla's, yet

he suddenly laughed. He had noticed that he was standing with slouched shoulders, drooping head—twisting his apache cap in his hands.

"From the sawdust ring to the straight stage!" he said. "The poor-but-honest exit, *Simpatica!*"

Again without a further syllable, he stepped from the little house.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was so late before the padre slept at all that he slept late, and he found himself having lunch for breakfast. And it had a sauce of sad thoughts.

"Was I too severe?" He started at his own phrase. "That beautiful blind girl has a strange, deep power of some sort! *Is* my nature too severe at times? And no sooner does she warn me of a fault, than I commit it! *Was* I too severe with Téodor?"

His worry was interrupted by a severer character than his.

"It is a shameful outrage," said Rosa, with neither apology nor good morning at her abrupt entrance, "that you should let this fat monster demoralize the town! He is tramping all over Terassa, with his hapless mate trailing alongside. There is no work in the poppy fields, for the little boys are tagging after them, doting on him just like her; and the vineyards might much better be deserted, for the two seem to be regarded as the familiar property of the town, and are holding a reception from terrace to terrace, none of which is the girl's fault; for, let me tell you, I have taken a fancy to her, and it is that ponderous keeper of hers, who is never out of sight or earshot of any one who approaches her, that needs a putting down; for, if the town has got to sentimentalize over this visitation, let us do it to some effect, by prying her loose from that vagabond, for is it not simply horrible to consider——"

"Rosa!" said the padre. "Rosa!" In

fact, he had already said it a dozen times, in the same hopeless tone.

"Come, you must be appalled by it yourself!" cried Rosa. "Any healthy mind would revolt at——"

"For some crazy reason," exclaimed the padre, "you have become prejudiced against this good-hearted mountebank. Do not plague me with nonsense, Rosa. Remember the old Latin saying against prejudice——"

"Come, come!" interrupted Rosa. "As you have often hurled at me, there is nothing at all in old sayings. For instance, remember our own famous proverb, 'A kiss without a mustache is like an egg without salt.' Now, what young Spaniard, of all the world, wears a mustache nowadays? Yet the world goes on, you will notice, just the same—salt, orphans, and everything."

"What has that to do with the mountebank?" asked the priest crossly.

"It has to do with his wife," answered Rosa promptly. "Such a lovely creature deserves something better, and the vain monster deserves a lesson. I should like to see some young, handsome——"

"Rosa," besought the padre, "do not talk lightly of such a subject! It is one heavy on my heart to-day, for Téodor——"

"I know it," said Rosa. "And let me tell you, rather than think of her chained forever to that fat man, I would cheerfully see her stop in a state of barbarism with the American."

"Rosa!" he cried. "Tédi has talked to you of this?"

"I wish he had," said Rosa. "I have taken a whim to him, too, and I would have encouraged him in every way."

"Friends," said a gentle, sad voice behind them, "Tédi has settled that problem himself, rightly and wisely. He has left Terassa, padre."

It was *Simpatica*. The old priest sat looking at her desolately for a

moment; then he bowed his head in his hands.

"Well!" said Rosa disgustedly, "I thought Americans were—*resolute!*"

"Padre, you will be glad of this," whispered Simpatica. "It went deeper than you knew. *This was the only way!* Tédi would want you to smile, I know that—and you must do it quickly, for you are having guests. They have been to see me and my little birds, and the girl is as beautiful in the morning as at night. Few women are that! She asked me if she might wear the big white mantilla that I have been making, and your eyes will gladden when you see her in it. She is ravishing!"

"Why does a married woman wish to wear a white mantilla?" demanded Rosa.

The padre went with Simpatica into the road, and the rare sight that she had promised was so truly beautiful that for an instant he forgot his sorrow.

"Welcome, my friends!" he cried. "Come into my garden. Rosa, will you bring wine to us here?"

"Ah, *mi Dios!*" sighed Doradilla ecstatically, letting go Enrique's hand. "Jacintas, padre! What a wealth of heaven's own fragrance! How white they must be!"

She glided among the bushes of pink and yellow roses to the white bank of heavy jasmine and turned amid the thick of it, lifting her arms in a gesture that draped the great, rich mantilla like a vagary of frost on a statue.

"Behold Doradilla, padre, who loves white flowers only!"

"Now, now, what an idiotic speech, Doradilla!" cried Enrique.

At the exquisite picture, enamel white, with its two staring bits of Della Robbia blue, the priest's sadness swept back upon him.

"Strange, lovely girl!" he cried. "What is this power of swaying hearts

—and reading them!—that God has given you? Indeed, you have made me, an old man, pause and ponder. As I look at you now, I believe that, even since your words last night, I have been too severe."

"Now, that is Doradilla from head to foot!" exclaimed Enrique. "She is forever finding people too severe! She complains that I am too severe—I, who pamper her forever! For instance, your worship, here Doradilla has been dragging me about for hours, tramping every rod of your town! We must even go into this parrot woman's house! Why? A nice house, nice parrots—a nice woman, for that matter. But *why?* And I believe she has spoken to every man on every vineyard terrace. What jumps! And now we must come on to your house, too, when, knowing how my magnificent size must make traveling irksome, no doubt you would cheerfully have come to us."

"I would cheerfully have conducted her in your place, friend," smiled the padre.

"Now, now, do you suppose she would let me leave her little blind side for an instant?" cried Enrique. "Now, would you, Doradilla?"

"My darling!" she whispered, and turned away among the flowers.

Rosa had come into the garden with the wine, and Enrique beamed at her delightedly.

"After all, I am not so sorry about the vineyards, which do serve a purpose," he said, "because," and his words annihilated the compliment that the padre supposed he was paying Terassa's wine, "when I gave out there that we must leave to-morrow morning, I was met with a positive storm of protest. So we will stop for one more day, your honor."

"Even then," said the padre heartily, "I shall be sorry to lose you."

Doradilla turned slowly about in the bank of jasmine.

"Your loss, when we leave you, padre," she said, her voice as silvery as the bright light on her snowy mantilla, "will be less than the one you have suffered since we came."

"My child," he cried, startled, "what do you mean?"

"It is simply my power of divination, padre. I can still read those Mediterranean eyes, you see. You have just lost something dear to you, have you not?"

"You are right, my child!" exclaimed the wondering priest.

"Now, now, Doradilla, you have no business to be doing that free of charge!" cried Enrique, gulping his wine indignantly.

"Come, Enrique," she said suddenly, "shall we not go home? Home!" she added, with a queer little silvery laugh. "Home to our big planeta tree! Poor padre! May you have back what was dear to you!"

CHAPTER XVII.

There was a summer languor in the night, for it was the last one of September, and a season, like a citizen, takes its time in Spain.

The torch flames stood straight up in the suave darkness. Only the ghost of wistaria color rustled. The primrose canopy had disappeared, and a drapery of dim white, silver gray in the torch-and-star radiance, hung like a web over the forking sycamore branch.

From behind the gently stirring tint of wistaria came a silver voice, at whose frail monotone the padre asked himself instinctively:

"Is it, like the new canopy, silver gray to-night?"

"Friends, friends," it called, "I come to tell your fortunes! I come to change your lives in one half hour!"

There was an instant hum among the people. A soft apathy had had them, for, though they had howled again at Enrique's rôle of a sprightly mountain, it was Doradilla they had been at heart awaiting. A rush of last night's excitement seized the town, now she was imminent.

Every woman from Juanita to Jacinta longed for a fresh sight of the rose-flame frock; every man—saving old Raméro—for a fresher one of the ivory statue rising from it.

To-night Enrique burst no bomb of goldfish over them. It was as if he had plotted to disappoint throughout—pleasantly, and for some purpose of his own—even to warning them, with her own voice, that she was not to appear by miracle again. He had given no subtle invitation to the holding of breath to-night, and so simple was Terassa that it was not held. Fate, in that listless moment, raised her knife again.

Out of the weblike canopy, like a sultry fall of summer rain, a slow shower of silver spiders sank to the stage. The wistaria curtain was lifted by a slow white hand, and Doradilla, languid as a lily, was before them.

And once more she was a creature no one, not even Enrique, had ever beheld until now.

She was in purple.

The rich mystery of the heavy color clung around her in elusive folds that answered the torchlight in every tone, from the velvet shade of royalty to the soft tint of violet.

She wore a silver coif. Its filigree was tight as a cap, and etched her wonderful classic features on the night in lines of sharp chalk, bold as dry point.

Some imaginative ladies of the town had ventured to prophesy long silver gloves, in place of last night's. She did wear silver gloves, but they came only to her elbows, and the god in the monster had placed in one of the grace-

fully fallen hands the flowers that, upon a woman, the monster himself must have known were beautiful—three lavender hyacinths. Her silver fingers, in their clasp of the Nile-green stems, pictured the drooping indolence of a courtesan. Only the great eyes, staring out through the torchlight, told of the woman of the night before.

But, for all the negligence of her desultory splendor, as she stood with the silver spiders filtering down upon her, the beauty of the creature, in its new expression, was unlesened; merely its diamond nature was gone. And unfolded, caressed, tantalized into luxury by the deeply, prodigally somber accouterments, both the posture and the cold ivory of the statue were there.

"My God, my God!" cried Rosa, in the voice of a martyr in a lion's mouth. "Last night's pink handkerchief must have smothered her!"

No one heeded the comment, but its cry loosed the suspended noise of the whole audience, and the place rang with tribute, from ringing cheers to the ringing clink of trinkets.

Through the subsiding racket, Enrique's protesting tones came from beside the platform.

"Now, now, you have made enough of that slow effect, Doradilla! What with those pretty flowers I gave you, and your expensive cap, the kind people have had enough of your beauty."

"Yes, yes, beloved," she murmured, her voice sweet despite its indolence. She motioned the people toward her with a limp gesture of the hyacinths. "Come, let me change your lives for you in the next half hour!"

As if striving to make their vigor a background for her fetching nonchalance, the audience stampeded for the platform. In the lead were an antique female and a comparatively infant male—Inés and Bernardo, contending together, as well as with the

swarming crowd, for foremost attention. Inés was still in a fret about her damnation; and, although the fair trickstress, true to her last night's word, had dealt with the little boys down in their poppy fields in the afternoon, she had dispensed but twenty-nine small fortunes there, and that of the oldest of the flower workers—if, indeed, Bernardo was the oldest—was still to do.

It was this question of his priority in years to Guillermo that he had hoped to settle, and he had waited to be last in case Guillermo, who was inclined to wait likewise, should not be too stingy to spend his money on the problem, which Guillermo had been. And finally he had staved off the hour of inquiry till night for another reason—he was the one little boy who, in the excitement of the occasion, had missed Tédi enough to suspect that he had quit Terassa, and, in his anxiety, he had decided to watch for him till the performance, and then, had he not reappeared, ask the lovely trickstress why, leaving his age to God.

And now, in the crucial moment, in the flutter of having worsted Inés by the accidental means of her much put-upon foot, and with his small brown hand in the lady's scarcely larger white one, he unaccountably changed his mind still again, and, staking his coin upon her beautiful purple knee, he besought her to prophesy whether he was ever going to America, where his Tédi had come from.

"What, what, my dear?" the padre heard her exclaim, with the edge, he thought, of a sharper metal than silver in her delicate voice, and an irony of word unsuited to her tender clasp of the youngster as she drew him close to her. "You, a dark-skinned, golden-eyed little Spaniard, go to the country of untutored hearts? You shall stop here, and marry a Spanish wife. Here, keep your coin, dear, to support her

with. Are you disappointed in your fortune? Indeed, it is a glorious one, your future—I feel it pulsing in your little heart already. Go now, my pet! Yes, yes, my friend.” And she drew the tangled Inés out of the indignant crowd with her slender white fingers. “You, too, have a question to ask about an important journey. Well, I will tell you.”

And she sent Inés to heaven for ten cents.

From the priest's position in the semidark, where Tédi had stood last night, he could see, distant as she was, the magic luster of her purple-and-ivory languor, discern the beauty that, in her very listlessness, had reached its highest power in Terassa's experience of her.

Simpatica was standing beside him, and he turned to her with a sigh.

“You said yesterday, Simpatica, ‘How terribly lovely!’ Is there some discord in her music to-night?”

“She lacks her foil to-night,” answered Simpatica simply.

The priest glanced at her swiftly. He knew that if there were an atom of spite in her anywhere, its gender was not female. As she watched the trickstress, her eyes were clouded, but it was with a tender kind of pain.

“At last, my friend,” he said, “I am reconciled to the news you brought me this morning. I can see now it *was* the only way. He did wisely—though my stubborn heart still cries, ‘Alas!’ at it.”

“Alas, indeed!” said Simpatica, and she pointed into the crowd.

Theodore was standing in the thick of it.

“Who is next?” floated the silver voice through the night. Its tones were still persuasive, artful, deliberate, but a little vibrance was creeping now through its languid articulation. “Who is next?”

Old Jacinta was next—the oldest woman in Terassa.

“Girl, girl,” she quavered, as the strange beauty took her hands, “I ask no fortune. Only tell me this: How can you smile, and languish like a queen, there in your desolate darkness, never seeing your own beauty?”

And, with a surprising suddenness, quick and sweet, with her first laughter of the night, Doradilla's answer rang out:

“Because God made me, and I am alive, and I am glad!”

Once more her trick had changed—if the leap of her magical personality from salamander of purple smolder to dragon fly of violet flame and silver glitter was a trick.

Banter crept into her swifter and swifter dealing with her customers. As she tossed off churches for the women and banks of England for the men, her voice rose and fell and gleamed in a rattling coin of merriment; the rich lavender flowers in her gesturing hand wafted through a lace-like maze of pantomime.

“Now, now, Doradilla,” warned Enrique, over her shoulder, “do not go so slapdash that you overlook folk of importance. There is the caballero, now, who was so generous last night, waiting this long while for his turn, Doradilla.”

“Where, my beloved?” she inquired.

“Here, Doña Señora!” cried Teddy from below the stage, and he reached his hands up to her.

She took both of them in both of hers; to do so she had to put her hyacinths by.

“Now, caballero, do not try to walk off with my flowers off of my wife to-night, mind you that!” pouted Enrique.

“And what fortune would you have, señor?” she inquired languidly. “Your travels, I take it?”

“My heart,” he cried boldly, and it leaped within him at the foolish thought that she had divined his absence.

"Your heart, indeed? It is white, I fear, señor. You seem to *love* white."

"I love it in—in others. It is not *my* color. Are my eyes still black?" he demanded.

"Gray is halfway between white and black, señor."

"Is it the color of irresolution?" he cried. His voice was trembling. She knew the color of his eyes, then, to-night. Frightened at the quiver of his own words, he made the voice boldly loud. "You were right last night. I swore I was resolute. Well, you have taught me. I *am* resolute now!"

"Are you telling *my* fortune, caballero?" In the irony of her words and tone he tried to read an undermeaning, a quivering like that of his own voice. "Or I yours, señor? You said 'your heart.' Ah, you will never have her! You do not dare enough, because you do not love enough! It—it is your foreign character."

"*I will have her!*" he cried.

"Do you hear that, Enrique?" laughed the silver voice. "He says he will have his lady if he has to—to filch her!"

"Then he will have her if she is all over flowers—I am sure of that!" sulked Enrique.

Teddy was trembling at her nearness, at the odor of the hyacinths, the stare of the hyacinth eyes that his searching gray ones could not fix. His hands still lay in hers. To reach them, she had leaned far over. Her wonderful ivory breast almost touched his cap. A fierce word of hot emotion sprang toward his lips. A big hand was laid upon his quivering shoulder.

As he had gone, step by step, in the crowd, nearer and nearer to the violet flame of the sultry night, the priest had followed. The boy shrank back guiltily, angrily.

"My daughter," said the padre, "I have found to-night what I had lost this morning. Shall I tell you, Dora-

dilla, what it was? It was a *heart*, my child, that was, as you divined, so dear to me."

She leaned swiftly toward him, her wide blue eyes seeking his brow, her ivory hand seeking his fingers.

"Ah, I have *prayed* for it, padre! All afternoon, for your sake, I have prayed! Ah, prize it, padre, now you have it back! No one knows deeper than I the mysteries of the heart." She pointed to the looming figure of Enrique. "Think you of the size of *that* heart. Must I, then, not know?"

"God be with you, child!" he said huskily, and he walked away, crest-fallen at his momentary thought of her.

Theodore, too, had moved off from the stage. The crowd of fortune hunters had closed round her again.

"I—am glad that you have come back," hesitated the padre. "My Tédi, I—am *trying* to be glad." And he held out his big hand, which had fallen so heavily just now on the American's shoulder.

Tédi did not take it.

"I have no right to, padre. I came back because I am—resolute."

Padre Pedro gazed at him sadly for a moment; then, with bowed head, he quit the green for the night. Teddy watched his departing figure with a bitter intake of breath, then he turned his eyes resolutely to the stage. Fortunes—fortunes—fortunes—

Half hour after half hour he stood in the shadows; half hour after half hour, while her silver voice changed destinies; half hour and half hour, until the people, with their altered lives, were wandering happily homeward, until the little boys had wearily carried off a torch and another and another.

A half hour, and her few remaining satellites were gone. The few lingering torch flames had closed around her, and, as she leaned back against Enrique, with a sigh, they were like a

burnished frame for her purple-and-silver portrait, vivifying every violet tone of the rich fabric that fell from her breast of flame-lit ivory.

"Come!" And a great hand of the monster fell like a huge blot on the pure marble. The green was lost in thick, swallowing darkness.

A half hour, and, wrapped in the old, battered overcoat, she had emerged with the giant from the little shop, and he had stretched himself, yawning, on the pile of cushions under the sycamore. Kneeling at his side, she stroked his forehead.

"Yes, yes, I admit it, Doradilla; you were wonderful again to-night. But stop talking about it now, and let me sleep, after that long, tiresome performance."

"Enrique," she pleaded, "have I not earned your love? My—my darling, will you—not let the old priest—marry us?"

He sat up violently.

"Now, stop that nonsense, Doradilla! There, what was that noise over us? There is no wind— Was it thunder, shaking the tree? You have gone and overwrought me from head to foot with your foolishness."

"It is a little breeze, not thunder, beloved. Enrique, *do I deserve nothing?*"

She sprang to her full slender height. She reached her arms desperately toward the big branches of the planeta. Her voice was a silver moan of hopeless prayer.

"What a love, what a giant love my giant tosses away! Enrique, if I work, work, work, will you *some time* marry me?"

"Well, well," he said pacifically, "only let me go to sleep, Doradilla, and I will dream about it."

With a sob, she sank down beside him in the darkness.

To-night, it was the padre's welcoming light that beamed out for Teddy through the late, long half hours. The

priest was as sure he would come as, last night, Simpatica had been; but, though he waited, both troubled and expectant, his best wits had not prepared him for the gasping man who burst into his room.

"*She is not married, padre!*"

"Téodor," trembled the priest, "you acted moonstruck last night——"

"*I tell you, she is not the monster's wife!*"

"And to-night," hastened the padre's words, "you are *veritably* mad! I do not believe what you tell me!" Yet he had shrunk back before the frantic delight and horror in the boy's ashy face.

"I swear I heard her own lips say it! I told you I was resolute. I climbed over the roof of the shop into the sycamore! She was *begging* him to let you marry them! I thank you now for your prayers, padre! *She can be my wife, for she is not his!*" And he laughed wildly.

"*Dios! Dios!*" cried the padre wretchedly. "She indeed changes life for us every half hour, and each half hour it is worse!"

"*Worse!*" cried the boy. "Do you *now* refuse to help me?"

"What can I do?" pleaded the padre. "I am heartsick at this! That exquisite creature—a trickstress, after all! She adores him! She would hate me, Téodor, as quickly as he, if I accused them. She would deny it. And if you yourself rush in where an angel would fear, what could come of it but tragedy—even bloodshed?"

"Do you call yourself an angel?" cried the violent boy. "When you wash your hands of it like the judge in the Bible——"

The hands that he libeled fell heavily on his two shoulders; the father's voice cried to him in a lost longing appeal:

"For this hapless one, God's pale, afflicted creature who has fallen because of her unhappy darkness, I have

only pity and a father's love. But having learned what you have learned, can you have for her still a *lover's* love?"

The youth writhed under his touch and under his words, but his vehemence cried out the passionate truth of his fidelity:

"I am what she dared me to be! I am resolute!"

"God, God," cried the padre, lifting his hands, "Thou placest before me, indeed, the mysteries of the human heart!"

Just as his hands had lifted, two others, distantly on the quiet green, had descended, and with his last words—"mysteries of the heart"—their own brilliant music from Madrid crashed through the night, in fortissimo chords.

At the wild noise, unearthy at this solemn hour, a sudden strange look came into Theodore's burning eyes. After an instant's silent listening, he dashed unceremoniously from the little house.

"Téodor!" called the priest.

But the boy rushed on through the Chasm Road, up the highway, across the green, toward the dim light that was glowing out from the vestibule of the fonda.

"Rosa," he cried, seizing her hands from the screaming keyboard, "you offered me your friendship—last night! I forgot that, like a fool, for twenty-four hours—you said, you know, not to count too much upon it. Rosa, I say to you now what *she* said—I *trust your friendship almost with my life!* I am late doing it—for you saw what was happening to me from the first moment! I ran away from it. I got as far as Ruby, and her word 'resolute' took to jeering at me there. When I first tramped here from Ruby, it cost me two days; to-day, I came back in six hours. Rosa——"

"Well, well," said Rosa calmly, "this chat is worth the risk I took coming up to the piano against the padre's orders.

You *were* a fool not to come to me earlier, for I am too haughty a character to volunteer my help to a self-satisfied foreigner. Yet it is better as it is, for now you have had one change of mind and forty-eight of her changing half hours to find out whether you were really resolute or not. It was precisely so with me, about the piano. I longed and longed to come up last night about this time, but I waited to see whether I longed for it quite enough to bear the padre's row afterward—and here I am. Playing alone, without that pitiable fool who thinks she is risking hell for it, I have to leave out half the notes, but that lends it a horrible fascination that enchants me. This part, for example, right here——"

He bore her down in turn, desperately.

"Rosa, listen to me! *She is not married to him!* So are you going to help me?"

"What?" gasped Rosa, whirling about and leaning ecstatically back upon "The Rapine of Eros." "Well, God be thanked! How do you know it? I told you they were Denmark! Help? I will strain my utmost muscle. But how do you——"

"I heard her pleading with him to marry her——"

"Well," exclaimed Rosa, "now I can understand the white mantilla—something you do not know of because you ran coyly away, as if you had got one on yourself. It is well you came to me, young man, for I believe I have good news for you. While you were hastening away from her to Ruby, she was making a *pasear* all over Terassa, poking into every last house in town and into every last vineyarder, too, so to speak, or so to make *him* speak, and I believe now, as I suspected then, that she was doing it to locate your harsh American voice. She began at Simpatica's, and wound up at the padre's, where she informed him he had lost

something dear to him, which, for some unaccountable reason, you are. Yes, I am certain she was combing the town for you!"

A great cry of gladness gathered in his throat, but he choked it back as her fingers fastened, like a vise, on his wrist.

"And I believe, my friend," she whispered breathlessly, "*that she is hunting for one or for both of us now!*"

"*Bueno Dios!*" he breathed.

Through the new moonlight, her white throat gleaming out of the dingy old coat, her wide eyes staring straight ahead of her, Doradilla was treading slowly, silently as a ghost, toward the yellow glow of the vestibule.

"She has not been once that far away from him before," whispered Rosa.

"And I thought, I *thought*," whispered Teddy, "that she knew I was in the tree, listening, when she betrayed herself to-night!"

Hand in hand, the boy and the old woman were creeping toward the spectral figure.

"*Doradilla!*" he breathed. "*Doradilla!*" But, even as she turned her wavering direction toward them, his hungry word was repeated through the night in a roaring, rasping discord:

"*Doradilla!*"

And she stopped, with a cry of agonizing terror, as the great figure plunged toward them out of the shadow.

"Enrique! Oh, *mi Dios*, beloved, beloved, where am I, where am I? I have been walking in my sleep, Enrique! Where are you—*Enrique?*"

"Use your American wits!" hissed Rosa, like an arising snake. "I have my Spanish ones!" And she dragged the confounded boy straight up to the panting Hercules, who glared, towering, over the girl. "Caballero, oh, caballero, pardon a female's imprudence, but I have fetched this poor maniac up to you for your counsel.

Oh, you calm, charming giant, whom we admire so very much, look at his looks and be friendly to us! We had hoped to wake you without rousing up your wife, and, as we prowled over the two of you, hesitating, we only terrified her from her slumber, while you never budged. Now, listen to this fearful tale, caballero—my poor boy friend is so worn down by an unholy passion that he stalks the night, and it was my happy thought that you would advise him how to do. For God knows—and this is what I was so anxious your sensitive wife might not hear—God, as I was saying, knows that *you* know—for He taught you Himself, caballero—how to make a woman dote upon you!"

Theodore had caught his breath, and he now caught the mountebank's arm.

"Yes, Enrique, help me; help me! Did you not notice how I tried to curry favor with you, giving you that big gold piece last night? And your large looks made me afraid. Señor, tell me this—how can I make my heart's desire believe me? How can I show her my love? She is blind to it! *You* have mastered the heart of a stone-blind woman, señor! With your magic, have you not opened her eyes to your—your—looks? *And ten thousand times more than you love your heart's desire, I love mine!*"

"Be resolute, señor; resolute!" laughed Doradilla, twining her arms around Enrique's sleeve.

"Well, well," said the giant, pacified in his sleepy confusion, "come and see me to-morrow, you two fools, and not at some foolish hour. Mind you, I will have no one rousing up my poor blind little wife. I now must needs lock us up in the shop on your account."

He dragged the trembling girl sulkily off into the shadows. Her vanished terror seemed to have swept back upon her.

"Beloved!" they heard her whispering.

"I am proud of you!" exclaimed Rosa.

"But did she understand me?" cried Teddy, as, very much as Enrique dragged Doradilla, she hauled him toward the highway. "And, if she did, of what use is it? She was only walking in her sleep—in her dreams of *that!*"

"Oh, yes, she adores him," responded Rosa. "She is not in love with you yet—get *that* out of your head! The wretch has her fast in a fearful, uncouth spell. You should have known that from what we both heard her say in the shop last night. But what of it, if we rout him?"

"Rosa, they go *to-morrow!*" groaned Theodore. "Mañana—that word *mañana!* It is a case of half hours, Rosa!"

"Well, forty-eight of them," said Rosa shortly. "What is our Spanish-American Rosa declared for? I shall not give up until the last fifteen minutes. Let me tell you, Teddy, I am resolute, if you are not."

His gray eyes looked into her black ones for a long moment; then, abruptly, he seized the erect old shoulders and kissed the thin old lips.

"Come!" gasped Rosa Quेरanza. "I may indeed be a beauty, my friend, but I am not a blind one—I can *see* the tragedies that happen to me!"

"I was—resolute, Doña Señora!" he ventured.

"Well, well, give me your arm and fetch me home decently, young man," said Rosa.

And they went decently down the highway toward the moonlit poppy fields.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was the first of October.

The early air was beautifully crisp. The great fall sun that rose out of the undulating yellow plain and awoke Teddy was a gorgeous thing of red, surrounded by radiant gold, and he sat

wonderingly up amid a sea of red and golden poppies.

Warmed by the sudden touch of needed friendship, and clinging like a child to the sense of its nearness, so exhausted by his long day of journeying that the steep highway had loomed like a mountain trail, he had staggered across from Rosa's house and made his bed in the moonlit drowse of the poppy fields.

After a moment of daze at the red-and-gold glory of the morning, he rose and made his way through the burnished flowers. Memory of the night flooded back upon him, but with it was the same warm touch of friendship. In the new vigor of the new day it filled him with a rush of hope, and he walked out into the great yellow *vega*, treading as if upon air. He was not happy, God knew well enough. His heart ached—but not heavily, dully. There was a keen beat of pleasurable pain in the throbbing of his sorrow, now. He was like a man in the grip of wine, dazed, not with the thickening of thoughts, but with their rapidity, whirl, acute succession. To this mind of his, a youth's and a foreigner's and a commoner's, but, for all that, an imaginative and a seeking mind, there was a matter of phenomenon in this girl's effect upon him—upon all Terassa. In striving to understand it, he himself underwent a phenomenon—of which a part was this physical sensation of lightness, such as a boy, joyous with his first kiss, might have felt. And other parts of it were the stabbing thrill of pain at his impending loss, and an eagerness in his throat, as he sped on into the welcoming reaches of the golden plain, to cry aloud the pain, the fanatical joyousness, the tormenting desire to understand the nature of her magic—all three of them at once—in one shouting demand of life to tear away for him the veil that hangs between every-

day man and the all-time mystery of the nature of love.

When he reached the poppy fields again, the little boys were at work; and, not having had him for a whole day, they swarmed at him for stories—Bernardo crying for tales of California, the other twenty-nine for news of Ruby. And, glad of occupation till Rosa should be up, he sat down where he had slept and told them tall tales of his trip to Ruby and back, until the clatter of a rickety door and an imperative voice brought him to his feet:

"Teddy! Teddy! Are you resolute, Teddy?"

Rosa's English had been improving all throughout its two syllables. She had got the diminutive of his name as pat as *Simpatica* had the whole of it. He left the little boys marveling at the sight of him walking arm in arm up the highway with a lady notorious for her prejudice against him.

The whole town was at work, and they found the green deserted. Evidently the mountebanks slept late, for there was no sign of life at the little shop. Rosa sank luxuriously onto the mound of cushions that they had abandoned after the misadventure of the night, and pulled her pupil down beside her.

"I suppose you will agonize over these," she said, "or sentimentalize, one or the other. But I am old, and chose them for comfort. Now, what I shall do, having thought it over on my own dispassionate couch last night, is this: I shall decoy the wretch over to the piano, in the name of entertainment, and immerse him in my 'Mysteries of the Heart,' while you propound yours to his chum. Of course, the fool will be tagging right at his heels, but rest assured I shall give a performance that will permit you to positively yell your improprieties at her if you like. But mind you are prompt about it, for the

dear tune bruises the padre in every nerve, and this time he will likely come pouring out to stop the racket. Now, is your speech ready?"

"I am resolute," said Teddy simply.

Resolution had time to pale, for it was almost the noon hour before the little shop door opened. But the two mountebanks were scarcely on the green before Rosa pounced upon them, Castilian in gesture, Catalan in volubility.

"We have not forgotten your promise, caballero. My poor friend is quieter in the mornings, but worse at heart. For a foreigner, he is a mass of grief and petulance. But first, in the name of Terassa, and as her most important citizen, I wish to entertain you on the piano—odd as that sounds. I play magnificently! So let us all go over to the fonda, and I will offer you and your lovely wife the season's rage of Madrid."

"I do not like music," said Enrique.

"What?" cried Rosa. "You, with those silver eyes?"

"Well, well, I will listen to it once," replied Enrique. "Come, Doradilla. What a pity it is you cannot see my eyes! You are so foolish about silver."

With her hand in his, he walked proudly over to the vestibule.

"I do not like music," he repeated, "but that is a nice piano. It has a nice picture on it."

Rosa reached for the loud pedal.

"Wait till you hear the tone," she said. "It is as deep as yours."

Teddy lounged over the keyboard.

Rosa's hands fell, and the giant trembled.

The boy's face was whiter than the pale, staring girl's.

"Doradilla," he whispered, "you know I love you! I would give my life for you! Even if you hate me, you must listen to me!"

"Señor!" she breathed.

"You must, *must* talk to me before you go! I love you! I love you!"

Enrique's voice rose thundering over the thunder of the piano:

"*What is that man saying to my wife?*"

Rosa's hands crashed madly from one end of the keyboard to the other.

"I love you!" she shrieked. "It is I talking to you, Enrique! I adore you in secret! Can you not see my trick? I love you, Enrique!"

"I love you!" breathed Theodore frantically. "More, more than he! I love you——"

"I love you, my Enrique!" screamed Rosa, pounding. "My pet, I love, love, love, love, love——"

A ghastly crash ended the din. The fist that had ended the *marqués* had fallen shatteringly on the keyboard. With both huge arms high in the air, the giant towered before the appalled three like an alive colossus, a figure of nightmare, awful in the sunlight.

"Young man," he roared, "*that woman is mine!* And that is all that I will say to you! It is to you, Doradilla, that I will talk of this!"

So frightful was his looming presence in its fierce dignity of outraged ownership that the American's arm sprang instinctively about the shuddering girl; but, with a frenzied gesture of abhorrence, she swept him aside and fled to her giant, her teeth chattering in her grief and terror.

"You have made my husband angry with me! Enrique, Enrique, can you think I do not love you? My own, my own, you would never be unkind to me, my darling, in their sight, even if I deserved it, Enrique?" She clutched at his great breast, reaching her arms toward his neck. "Do you wish them to *learn* how I love you? Enrique? *Enrique!*" She clung to him, kissing his sleeves, the hands that he had slowly lowered to his sides. "Let me kiss your lips! I will yet make you

let me kiss your lips! I adore you! I worship you, Enrique!"

The great figure stood motionless, unyielding, and she sank down, down, clinging to his knees, sobbing her words of idolatry, bowing her golden head to the very grass, kissing his shoes, craven, groveling.

"Well, well," he said at last, "I will believe you for the present, Doradilla. Get up and go into the shop, and stay there."

She rose and went—shivering, her head bowed.

He stood for a moment; then, with a last lowering glare at them over his slouching shoulder, he lumbered slowly after her across the green.

Teddy turned to Rosa with sick eyes, his hands shaking in front of him.

"*I loathe her!*" he said.

"Come, be cheerful!" exclaimed Rosa. "That should be snow to you, though it was slush to me. I know her kind! The creature has vast emotions and not a spark of character. If her fat man died, she would shriek like a bugaboo for five minutes and then be quite happy with some decent fellow."

"What decent fellow would be happy with *her*?" he choked. "*I loathe her!*"

Teddy and Rosa were not the only desirous spirits who had hungered to sunder the mountebanks for a private talk with one of them. When Teddy had left the poppy fields, one of the little boys had followed in his and Rosa's wake up the highway, and since had continued near them, as impatient as they for the little shop to open, though discreetly in the background.

But this hoverer's eagerness for confidential chat had to do not with the golden poll, but with Enrique. It was José. And, undeterred by his former experience in this quarter, and the monster's present awful looks, he now seized this first opportunity and intercepted him under the sycamore.

"Caballero," he whispered impor-

tantly, "do you remember my telling you about that dreadful murder?"

Enrique stopped short.

"What? What?" he demanded.

"Notice, caballero, how I have taken care your frail wife should not hear me," said José. "Yesterday, caballero, Tédi, yonder, walked to Ruby. And, will you believe it, caballero, the murdered man found in the young flower girl's room was a marqués, the Marqués del Aragón!"

"You lie! You lie!" cried Enrique.

"It is true, señor. The civil guard was near Ruby, looking for the poor girl and a lover of hers."

"You lie!" gasped Enrique again. "You lie!"

"Tédi," continued José, "kept talking to every one about you and Doradilla, thinking to make a sensation describing you. And he did. But, even so, forever the talk would come back to the murder."

"Well—well," panted Enrique, "I have told you that little boys must not talk of murders, and here is something to take up your wicked little thoughts. *We are leaving Terassa, poor Doradilla and I!* We shall give our last performance immediately. Go tell your padre, now, and every one else. Quickly, mind! Tell the lady folk we are selling our pretty fabrics, do you hear? Those who would buy must hurry. Yes, those who would see us at all must hasten, too. And you—will you run?"

"Yes, yes, caballero!" And, twice as fast as he had run for him before, José rushed for the Chasm Road, shouting his news to Tédi and Rosa as he passed them.

"They are going! *Mi Dios*, they are going now!"

The youth caught the old woman's hands desperately, and they looked long at each other.

"You do not loathe her, after all?" asked Rosa.

"Good God!" he moaned. "It is the last half hour!"

CHAPTER XIX.

As José disappeared, Enrique sank, weeping, to his knees under the spreading sycamore, like a great, dismal Virgin, his palms stiffly together before his dripping nose, as best he could remember after the fashion taught him long ago by his mother.

"Dear, good Señor God," he wept, "I beg of You to bring the marqués back to life! Make me the favor, You being so clever in such matters, dear, good Caballero God! Tell him, señor, that I will never kill him again! And if You cannot rouse him up, then mind You put him far down in hell, for being obdurate, after causing me all these troubles! And mind You, Señor, how pious I have been! Amen!"

"Friend," cried the distressed padre, coming hastily up behind him, "what has so grieved you? Why do you leave so suddenly? In what sorrow do you pray?"

"O-o-o-oh, your worship," sobbed Enrique, drying his eyes and struggling to his feet, "I was praying for the soul of that young American, yonder, who has gone and driven us from town! He went and made love to my wife, to my own wife—and without my permission, your honor. What do you think of that?"

"Alas!" cried the padre simply.

"And I was on my knees to God, your honor, asking Him to deliver me from such wicked American characters, and to have mercy on his naughty soul! So unhappy am I that nothing will do, indeed, but that we must leave at once, your worship."

"Alas!" cried the padre again bitterly; and, without argument, he turned sadly away.

He shunned Teddy and Rosa, and, as Enrique rolled off toward the little

shop with loud, wheedling commands to Doradilla, he mingled with the hastily arriving crowd and sought to stay the rising tide of its gossip. The accepted cause of the mountebanks' departure was drifting rapidly from tongue to tongue, so that poor Tédi's passion was by now buzzing even on the lips of the excited little boys.

Despite it, Rosa had dragged the conspicuous youth into the very thick and front of the increasing swarm, and, from among the youngest generation of gossips, Tito sidled bashfully up to his hero.

"I have had some thoughts myself, Tédi," he whispered, squeezing his fingers, "that to a blind lady perhaps small stature would not matter. I do not think she realizes the enormity of her husband."

Enrique had been piling his goods haphazard on the platform. The delicate tints of curtain and canopy were slung pell-mell over the sycamore branch. They were lovely for a shining moment; then they seemed suddenly dull. The sky was overcast. The last half hour was changing from minute to minute.

Something seemed to be going out of Terassa, out of life, with the town's abruptly departing friends. When she came, Doradilla's presence seemed to drive this to the heart. In her plain white frock, as she stood silently, rigidly, on the platform, her staring face holding as much whiteness as her whole lovely person of the night, her beauty seemed stark, a thing of desolation. It was glorious, but not radiant. Her great blue eyes, dark with pain, gazed straight before her, straight over Teddy. He was directly below her, pressed against the platform by the crowd.

In watching her, he forgot the town's exasperating knowledge of his emotion. And the town was momentarily forgetting it. Each fabric, as it was swiftly

raffled by Enrique's honeyed voice, seemed, to the hopeless American, a minute torn from his half hour—a leaf from a doomed sycamore in the grip of autumn.

"Who will buy my little spheres? Who will buy?" cried the gray-white voice of Doradilla. Its only silver now was the coins it called to her.

Teddy did not buy. She sold six. The rose-colored one fell at his feet.

Enrique saw it. Teddy tossed him money. Rosa squeezed his arm. His heart had leaped.

A gasp rose from the people, as Enrique, with a swirl of rich color in their eyes, hurled out Doradilla's gowns for sale. This was unexpected. Terassan ladies became American eagles. The violet and silver went to Violeta, and thereby Toninio at last eased his conscience of last year's festival love smoke. The rose and gold fell to a syndicate of señoras. For its sole possession, Juanita had made mad endeavors—staking her whole dowry on it, doubtless considering it a better one. Enrique became a mass of beaming prosperity.

"Yes, yes; my little wife must have a new dress every night. We are going to Bilbao, and thence to America. If any one kindly asks after us, make me the favor to say so."

Doradilla lifted an armful of rich white from the chattels and dropped it down to Simpatica, who had worn her pink cloak to please her. It was the mantilla.

"Keep it—for my—for Terassa's sake!" begged Simpatica. But Doradilla only shook her head.

"Fortunes?" cried the gray-white voice. "Will any one have fortunes told?"

Some of the little boys scrambled to the stage. Several of them came back crestfallen.

"I had some money. We must have

lost it, running," they said. The padre supplied them.

Enrique was moving about in all directions as his pale consort went mechanically through the penny destinies on the stage. He was shaking hands immensely, everywhere. He was in glorious spirits. His pockets clinked. Through the sensation of the gowns, merriment had made its way broadcast, and a nighttime joyousness asserted itself. Only Amarillis was weeping, and she suddenly stopped—when, strangely enough, Enrique had just shaken hands with her.

Even the most morbid person in Terassa would not have supposed that this would positively give Amarillis hydrophobia; but the padre and half the crowd thought so presently. In the gay moment of the precious half hour, Fate had struck again, this time with Amarillis in her hand.

As Enrique climbed back upon the platform, she darted from the crowd and fled up the green. So swift was her onrush that she was beyond catching when her flight was appreciated. Enrique was making a loud speech from the stage, and those near it did not see her. She sped straight to the back of the green and up the slope, as if to plunge into the chasm.

"My God! My God!" cried the padre, and the crowd shouted. But she circled at the very crest, and dashed down again, gaining impetus with every yard. That there could be a purpose in her frenzy did not occur to any one who knew her.

"I thank you! I thank you!" beamed Enrique, thinking the racket his, and bowing to it.

She was bent direct for the back of the platform. She rushed nearer and nearer. She was on the steps. She was on the stage. Lunging like a little goat, her hands in front of her head like horns, she sprang for Enrique's enormous back, and, with a bellow of

terror, the poor giant toppled into the crowd.

Doradilla, shrinking away from the edge, gave a frightened cry.

"Amarillis!" shouted the padre. "Amarillis! Are you mad?"

The little old lady's eyes were agleam with rage.

"M-m-money!" she articulated, dancing up and down and pointing frantically at the dazed Enrique and at her pocket.

"She lies!" roared Enrique, heaving to his feet, and pandemonium rose upon the green. Amarillis, though so small, was largely loved, and a dozen vineyard arms sprang for the mountebank.

Over the tumult rang a voice thrilled with joyous excitement—Rosa's.

"Thank God, thank God, this will be a scandal that should help us, Teddy! Who would have supposed that that dank oyster, Amarillis, would have had such a pearl in her for us?"

Padre Pedro plowed through the crowd, and, when he reached its center, he raised his arms for silence.

"I do not believe this, but it must be found out! You shall be held, Enrique, until I am positive!"

His voice was resonant through the hush. For an instant the roaring giant thrashed like a windmill in the hands of his pinioners; then he relaxed in their grip and burst into pitiful dolor.

"It is a lie, your worship!" he wept. "It is a crime—indeed it is—that, after all my kindness and my pretty tricks, I should be outraged by a nasty little woman in a nasty little town—"

"Take care!" thundered the padre. "Your adjective for my town was a mistake, my friend! It has not helped you!"

"It was not meant for an adjective, I assure your worship," sobbed Enrique.

"Silence!" cried the padre. "I shall be severe with you! Some of my children have mysteriously lost coins to-

day. To search your weighty pockets would be profitless, but I must be satisfied. Amarillis——"

"Oh, oh, I thought you loved me!" wailed Enrique. "Look at my poor little wife trembling there! Consider her! You love *her*—you know you do! Ask her if I would steal! Doradilla, convince them!"

With her great eyes full of wild terror, she was standing motionless, save for her pitiable trembling.

"Doradilla," said the padre, his voice suddenly gentle as he turned to her, "he is right—my people love you. My own heart bleeds for you. But this is a tragic matter. I must see justice done."

"Persuade him, Doradilla!" screamed Enrique. "Why do you not speak to him? Doradilla! Doradilla!"

She took a faltering step toward the edge of the platform. Her hands fluttered before her in a gesture of anguish. The great hyacinth eyes flickered and closed. She reeled and fell backward from the stage.

With a strangling cry, Teddy caught her in his arms. A little vortex of people closed around them.

"There!" shrieked Enrique. "You see now what you have done! She may die of this! Let me go to her, I tell you! Let me go! My wife has never swooned in her life before!"

"Hold him!" commanded the padre. "Indeed, her grief lends color to this matter! As for her swoon, you told me how she did at the bullfight, friend!"

Her lovely head was in Teddy's arms.

"Kiss her while you can!" hissed Rosa.

He had needed no bidding. He was covering the white cheeks, the closed eyelids, with wild caresses, while Rosa covered the two faces with her skirt.

As if from the magic of his lips, the great eyes opened.

"Is your love *real*?" she breathed.

"Do you swear, *swear* that I can trust you?" Her voice was tense with desperate terror, her hands clutched his so that the little nails cut them. A helpless cry of inarticulate rapture answered her. Her voice came quickly, in little molten-silver whispers: "*If you are lying to me, I am damned in hell! If you are not resolute, I am utterly lost!*"

"*I would be damned in hell for you!*" he breathed.

"And the old woman?" her lips trembled. "Is *she* my friend?"

"What color are my eyes, girl?" whispered Rosa.

"Then lift me up!" she quivered. "But—hold me, hold me!"

They lifted her to her feet, stood with their trembling arms fast around her.

Enrique gave a yell of relief.

"There, she will tell you now to let me go! Tell them I am not a thief! Tell them, Doradilla!"

Her staring eyes wandered frantically over the crowd.

"Terassa, Terassa," she cried, "I will tell you the absolute truth, Terassa, if you will believe me! But will you, will you, oh, *will* you?"

"Yes!" came a score of voices; and the cry was taken up. The troubled old priest could not bring himself to join it, but its friendly faith in her held back his protest—he was silent. By instinct, the crowd had cut itself in two. Half was banked behind Enrique, half behind her.

"Here, then, Terassa, is the truth!" she cried, her voice ringing clear and sharp as a desperate gambler's last metal. "He did take the old woman's coin. I know it! I saw him take it!"

After an instant of breathless silence, through the astounded quiet rose Enrique's voice, in a wild, hysterical laugh:

"My wife is moonstruck! Look you, grief has driven her mad! I ask you,

how could a blind woman *see* me take the coin?"

As her desperate speech had left her lips, the terror had seemed to leave her great staring eyes. With a violent impulse of her whole body that almost tore her wrists from Theodore and Rosa, she took one step toward him—forthright, livid, hoarse.

"*You thief and villain,*" she cried, "*you worse than thief and villain, I am not blind, and never have been blind!*"

CHAPTER XX.

The white face gray, the silver voice dark with fury, the slender body lithe with passion, she wrenched loose one of her arms and leaped a pace farther—this thing, scarcely a woman now, that Terassa, Enrique, had never seen before. The people—priest, vineyarders, women, little boys—had been a unit in their reply—a cry, loud, but presaging silence; for once more their newcomer had, in one instant this time, changed life for them in changing herself.

The delicate golden poll, the vivid, the languorous, the childlike and sweet, the Doradilla plaintive almost to the contemptible, was now swallowed, as if ravenously eaten, into the white and black of this creature, whose raucous voice poured out at its victim:

"God, God, God, my prayers are answered! Fool, fool, fool! From the instant your eyes looked into mine across your ghastly work, I have tricked you; tricked, tricked, tricked you, day and night, hour by hour, while you waked, while you slept! Yes, while you slept, for then, in place of your hell's intimate, lying to you with every breath, I have been hell's lonely daughter, praying, praying, praying for more strength, more wit, to trick you with next day!"

"She is mad!" the giant shrieked to the people.

"Look at him!" she screamed back. "Look at him, Terassa—the dupe of a woman, of a girl, of an ignorant girl, who knew only how to use her wits and *pray!* Look you at the pallor of his face, consider the blindness of his eyes, opening now to the hell I have escaped from and the hell I shall plunge him into!"

Another shriek struggled from the writhing monster.

"Yes, yes; she is mad! Stop her, bind her! She has gone mad, I tell you! She will harm some one!" But her answering cry—high, wild, full of frenzied triumph—rang over his words:

"*Mark* you that, Terassa, for remembrance when I have told you what he is! I have known he would call me lunatic if I betrayed him and he could not kill me! It is an excuse for the cowardice of my silence, and for my cowardice, now, in letting this man hold me. Look you here, Terassa, look you at my face, study hard its lines! Protect me from that creature, on pain of your after remorse, until you have sent to the city of Barcelona and found whether such and such features were those of a flower girl in the rambla!

"Did a storm sweep your town ten days ago? It swept the city! It scattered my little gains away from my stall, and drove me home, through deluge, to my lodging. Listen, I beseech you, listen! There were two men who had asked for me in marriage. Did I say men? This carrion here was half of them! He had bullied me into a fear of him—into the cowardice you have seen, Terassa; into a very terror lest indeed I love him, a terror that made me long to love his rival. Hark you, Terassa—when my decent mother, dying, left me her poor bequest of love and words, the words were these: 'I have cursed you with beauty in poverty. And now I leave you helpless. Live thus: *When prayers fail, use*

your wits. When wits fail, pray. Ah, I used both in that fine school of the streets, the flower market—and with the gay reward, that day, of scampering coins and a soul terrified, for one hideous instant, by the belief that I had been stricken blind. *For one instant.* Yet it was, had I known it, the answer, in one lightning flash, to all my prayers! I was hurled, reeling, like a drowned woman by a wave, against the door of my little room. And what was there, Terassa; what was in there?"

Enrique shrieked again, but now with no articulate word, and all but the panic of his long-drawn yell was drowned by the abandon of her ferocity.

"Suffer, Enrique, suffer! Fear, Enrique, fear!" And her wrist tore from Theodore's grip and her hands shook through the air toward her prey in the suffusion of her rage. "Suffer and fear, fear, as *I* have suffered and feared! I ask you, while he writhes, what was in there, Terassa? In the dusk, in a horrible flare of sickened candlelight, freshly dead, yet strewn, as if ready for burial, with my own white flowers, lay the body of the man I thought I loved, and, over him, his giant paw stained with blood from striking him down, crouched this great dog who stands here baying now!"

And the giant pawed the air now, howling, but the tide of her raging voice swept on:

"I could see the picture of the deed in his guilty face, just as I could read death for myself in the eyes that then looked up and saw me standing there, in the doorway! Yes, go you, some one, to the city of Barcelona, and if murder has not out, it will at your news—the news that Terassa holds, for the examination of the municipal guard and the civil guard, Bianca, the white-flower girl of the rambla market, and Rodrigo, murderer of the Marqués del Aragón!"

The hush that had held priest and people broke; their thrill of horror at the transformation of their delicate idol dissolved in a murmur that swelled into uproar, through which Enrique's voice cut, with piercing fear:

"Lies! Lies! Mad! *She* killed him! I saw her do it!"

"With this hand?" she cried. "Look at it and judge, Terassa! He was killed by a blow on the temple—did *this* hand do it? Yet it has the strength to garrote a giant, Rodrigo, now it is free to work! Do you fear, beast? Do you begin to pay the price? Mark, mark, Enrique, how I have fooled you, from the instant I saw murder leap into your eyes, bidding you leap at me! In that one instant I knew you to the bone. I prayed—I used my wits. And I used them again and again and again, as, moment after moment, I studied the hell that had opened before me! I told you I loved you, you who had besought and besought me in marriage. I pleaded with you to marry me, knowing how you would then pause, dog, to consider that you did not have to! And *that* far free of you, I pleaded like one abandoned for your mere love, praying that in your bully's vanity it would occur to you to deny me even that. I thank the good God, it did!"

Behind her, a figure fell to its knees with a man's passionate heart cry of gratitude in one boyish sob:

"*Bueno Dios! Bueno Dios!* I, I thank You, God!"

The cry was smothered by a shout of rage from Enrique, but his great voice was in turn borne down, once more, by the ringing hate of hers:

"Yes, yes, Rodrigo, you did not care for the love of a *blind* woman, no? Well, hound of the pit, do you now think you have had Bianca's? Fool, while you have lain beside me, smiling at the craven passion you thought you were torturing, drinking my words of desire, eating my hungry debasement,

every syllable has been a caress of hate, every caress a link in the chain binding you to the choking iron collar of Spain!

"Do you know your slave, your trickstress now, Enrique? Do you know her now? Consider, Enrique, how she has read every thought in your villain's mind, weighed every chance of escape against your devil's nearness, in which, *until this half hour*, you could have reached her with that same fist of yours if she had betrayed you. Consider how she toiled with the roasted shards of hell, day, night, half hour after scarlet half hour, until she had read and read, to her utter satisfaction, a heart in which were printed honesty, bravery, loyalty!

"Fool, fool, fool, I tested the good priest, and learned to fear his very virtue. I tested the old woman, and she warded me off. I tested the sweet lady of the parrots, and she shrank like a bird from me, thinking me a wanton! But, fool, behind me stands a man who has offered me love, strength, protection, and *meant them, if only for a half hour long enough to doom you!* Fool, I was desolately hunting that man yesterday, when I dragged you mile after mile of town and terraces! Fool, monster with a child's brain, I was desperately seeking that man last night, when you waked and captured me. I had already told him, for I knew that he was listening before you slept, that you were not my husband!

"Why did you not run off yesterday, when I gave my soul to despair, believing that heart had deserted me, and only prayer was left to me for the calling of it back? You could have fetched me into France, then, as you intended! But my prayers to God thwarted you!"

In an agony of rage, hate, terror, he turned, not upon her, but from her to the people.

"Padre—your honor—Terassa, can

you believe I would be a murderer? She lies, and, whatever comes, I will kill her yet for this!"

Her wild voice echoed the words with a maddening laugh.

"Kill her! Try! Try! God has answered my million prayers, and Terassa *believes* me! Belief in a man's love made me dare to tell; and their faces, the faces of these kind people, are, as they look at me, no longer the faces of demons in my hell of fear! Kill her! Try! Try!"

And he tried. He struggled with sudden frenzy, kicking, biting at the hands that held him. But he cringed suddenly with a wail of fright.

A little darker, a little darker, the sky had gone toward a menace of evil weather; and yet a little darker, and a vibration almost like sound in its suggestion sped through the ground.

"*Wait!*" she cried, commanding heaven with her gesture and her terrible face. "*I have not cursed him yet! Rodrigo, Enrique, murderer, I curse you!* All the curses that came upon me in the Rambla of the Flowers I heap upon you! I taunt you! You, who would have made a drudge, a trull, of me, were first my savior—do you know that? In the guise of a humble suitor, the Marqués del Aragón would have betrayed me. You killed him, Rodrigo, as he deserved to, be killed. You avenged me, fool! And I now avenge him! In the name of the guards, I curse you! May they dog your steps through Spain, the municipal guard, and the civil guard!"

A wailing despair broke from the giant's twisting lips.

"Pity, pity me and let the truth be known! I did not mean to murder him, Bianca!"

"I curse you!" she screamed.

"Bianca, Bianca, send me to eternal prison, but do not end my life!"

"I curse you!" she screamed again.

"*May lightning strike you!*"

And following the very trail of her words, there was a mutter, there was a rumble, there was a crash, and a shriek of abandonment to mortal fright burst from the monster's throat. Screaming, through the wild sheets of lightning and the alternating dark, he rushed across the green. Shouting, the Terasans followed.

And others than Terasans followed; figures gay as the peasant figures had come running up the highway from Ruby, had mingled, finding most of their work done for them, with the crowd. It was the civil guard.

The giant had shrieked with new terror as he had recognized her curse in their uniform, miraculous, to his sick eyes and sick soul, as the apt coming of the thunder and the lightning. Screaming, screaming, he ran, zigzag, hopeless, desperate.

She had run, like the others.

She stood in the very center of the green, watching his rat's progress, her arms upraised, her voice riding the thunder:

"It is the answer to prayer, the answer to prayer!"

His own worst cry of all had articulated words in it:

"I am blind!"

It wrenched a shout of awe from Terassa, not alone by its words, but because it rang down from the slope. He was running where Amarillis, Fate's knife for him, had run.

At the next flash, his cry was a long, long roar, of ghastly rapture rushing into hideous anguish, for he knew again that he could see, and then knew that he saw too late. He was at the very top, the very brink.

He recoiled, but now Enrique knew that in truth he was a man of magnificent bulk. With a last, a pitiable shriek, he plunged, and, with a fierce, silver hiss, deluge followed him down into the chasm.

As if with the downpour—as if with his death—life seemed to change again, erasing the dour black of the woman and of the scene; for, through this dash of silver rose a silver still more glittering, more rare—her voice, in a laugh as high, as crescendo, as his screams had been, yet sweet with all the music of her trickstress nights. And with the laugh she turned, her arms triumphantly outstretched in the completion of her terrible work.

The padre thought she was about to fall, like a spent flame, and he sprang to catch her. But she swayed upright; the arms fell only to her hips; she stood akimbo, smiling, daring, brilliant, dancing-eyed. The words of her silver voice were crisp, tempting, contemptuous, and these, with the eyes, were not for Terassa, but for a young officer of the guard, whose bold young pride in his change of uniform from municipal to civil had been wiped from his handsome face by his marvel at her furious beauty, which held him staring at her as she now gazed back at him, demanding:

"Well, *puntillero*, are you still a married man?"

Then she fell.

CHAPTER XXI.

The arms that caught her were not the impetuous American ones that, madly ardent as any Spaniard's, had reached for their desire. It was Padre Pedro who gathered her up and ran with her to the little shop.

When the big hyacinth eyes opened, the white-flower girl kept them from the face of the trembling boy who hovered desperately beside the priest.

"Padre," she said, "God has answered it all—and I am not sorry that I did not trust you sooner. How could I dare? When I fell from the platform into the Americano's arms, that moment was the first, the very first, since that

horrible black day of the murder, in which I had been actually separated from the monster, actually out of his power, for the smallest fraction of time. But I trust you now, and you shall learn that I can be trusted, too; for, let me tell you something: God gave us Spanish women passions, and you have seen me as a Spanish woman to-day, seen my worst, a worst I do not deny, an avenging spirit, a thing of darkness. It was I, Bianca, padre. I was all of it, despite the great prayers I have boasted of, despite a vow of mine, in the beginning of my captivity, to escape by deserving it, as well as by my wits—by the giving forth, in every look and every gesture, the love—oh, the deep love!—of humanity that, through my own torment, I had learned to feel!

"Can you believe me after what you saw just now? But that monster was not humanity! Have you, has Terassa, divined any of that love of mine? Indeed, I am a better woman for my stay in hell! Yet of my best, the utmost best is that I am truthful, and I am all that you saw. And with all the strength that caused what you saw, padre, I am proud. I will not smirch your hospitality—Terassa's! I respect, as you besought me last night to respect, the

heart dear to you. Señor," and she turned suddenly, with all her flash and power, with all her silver of voice and classic coolness of beauty, but with eyes lowered—still a new Doradilla—to the trembling American, "señor, I call you so for the last time"—a gasp came from him—"to mark the word in telling you that forever in my thoughts you are caballero! Caballero, I am what you saw to-day—a Spaniard. In honesty you have offered your all to a weak, docile, golden-haired creature. In equal honesty, the creature of the tempest frees you. I release you, caballero!"

He caught her roughly to him and kissed her lips.

"I will make you, make you, make you love me!"

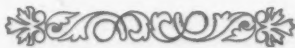
She looked up at him; her voice was low, breathless.

"I have called myself truthful. Caballero, it is loving you that I release you."

He kissed her again, again.

"But you do not yet know me!" she whispered. "I—I am black-haired, caballero!"

"Peace, peace, my hearts!" said the padre, laying a big, gentle hand on each of them. "Tédi, my Téodor, all of our prayers are answered!"



THAT KISS I STOLE

THAT kiss I stole? I gave it back!

She said it tasted like another—

So I tried hard to fill the lack.

That kiss I stole? I gave it back!

She said that I had not the knack,

Although I kissed her to a smother.

That kiss I stole? I gave it back!

She said it tasted like another!

D. E. WHEELER.



THERE are several ways in which a man may kiss his own wife.

There is the perfunctory peck that serves as a punctuation mark when he leaves home in the morning or returns in the afternoon. There is the ostentatious salute delivered in the presence of his wife's relatives. There is the amatory osculation marking moments of real emotion. But pleasantest of all—I am told—is the playful kiss that has neither provocation nor purpose, merely a little bubble of joy on the stream of life, popping up spontaneously from nowhere, performing its gay little function, and disappearing to be forgotten the next moment. Of all married kisses, it is the most significant, for it comes into being not as a duty, not as a token of a passing flame of passion, but because the bond between the couple is so strong and sincere that they can play with it and not be ashamed.

Yet this was the kind of kiss that caused all the trouble between Loring Hanscombe and his lovely young wife Julia. Though conceived in the gayest of moods, it provided the occasion for—— But let's to the tale.

Standing at the open door of his wife's boudoir, Hanscombe saw her sitting at her desk finishing what apparently was a rather long letter and put-

ting it into its envelope. Her back was toward him, and with a boyish grin he tiptoed to her chair, leaned over, and suddenly kissed her. Naturally, she was startled. Even a woman so frequently and thoroughly kissed as Julia can be taken by surprise. With an exclamation of pretty dismay, she turned, saw her husband, hastily pushed the addressed envelope under her blotter, and gave Loring a wifely welcome.

"To whom were you writing, Julia?" Hanscombe asked a few minutes later.

It was the one occasion in all their lives when he should not have asked that question. It was the one letter Julia Hanscombe ever wrote that she did not want him to see; that, in fact, he must not see. If some traffic officer had only delayed his machine, if his boots had only creaked, if he only had not been, in that mood for a playful kiss—a few seconds would have changed everything.

Julia looked up at him with a quizzical smile.

"Lorrie," she said, "did you ever ask yourself what is your besetting sin?"

He turned away a little impatiently, and seated himself in an easy-chair.

"I don't know that I ever did," he said.

"Well, I'll tell you—it's curiosity. You don't really care to whom I am

writing, but you just have to know everything—don't you, dear?"

Her manner robbed her words of sting, as she went over to him, perched herself on his knees, and snuggled her face close to his. Whatever tinge of ill humor the suggestion might have caused was soothed away by her loveliness and soft, clinging quality.

"It's just because I can't help being interested, even in the least important things that concern you," he explained.

"But it isn't good for you, and you must overcome it," she persisted.

This insistence had a rather chilling effect. Hanscombe, accustomed in their two years of married life to unqualified adoration, disliked the hint that his wife did not regard him as absolutely perfect. While he had no desire to be looked upon as a god, neither was it agreeable that Julia should find his psychology in need of specific treatment. That he felt wounded was obvious, and Julia drew away a little, looking into his eyes with a half-reproachful smile.

"Never mind," she said softly. "I don't care if you are curious. And as for the letter—it's to Cleve Pennell, so you see there was nothing to make all this bother about, was there?"

"I didn't make any bother," Hanscombe protested. "I simply asked a casual question, and you made it the text for a diagnosis of my moral shortcomings."

"Well, well, I take it all back, and we won't think about it another minute. Besides, dinner must be ready, which is much more important."

It was well enough for Julia thus to dismiss the matter, but with the mention of Cleveland Pennell's name, the incident assumed a new aspect. Pennell had been Hanscombe's only dangerous rival for the affections of Julia Marsden, and while he had taken his defeat gracefully, attended the wedding, sent them a costly present, and

been a frequent visitor at their home, yet there was something sinister about the man that made him the villain of any piece, no matter what his rôle. Among men, the elasticity of his scruples was well known, but among women his cloak of engaging personality always won popularity.

These things Hanscombe had never mentioned to Julia, because it would have seemed ungenerous, but now, recalling her expression of dismay when he had surprised her, also that she had told him to whom she was writing only to avoid a quarrel, and, most important of all, that she had still failed to tell him the contents of the letter, his dislike for Pennell became an important factor in the situation. Consequently, he was silent through the first courses of dinner, until Julia suddenly exclaimed:

"Chatterbox!"

They both laughed, Julia merrily, her husband forcedly. He pretended to give his attention to the roast, and then asked, in what he considered an indifferent tone:

"What were you writing to Pennell about?"

Julia looked at him a few minutes in amazement, and then laughed again.

"You boy!" she said gleefully.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Oh, I don't care," he replied, trying to be offhand about it. "You seemed to demand conversation, and —" He hesitated.

"And that was what you have been thinking about all this time," she prompted.

"Not at all. Go ahead and write two-page letters to Pennell every day in the year for all I care."

"Now, Lorrie, aren't you getting just a little petulant about nothing at all?"

Suddenly, Hanscombe realized the affair had gone so far that he could not now permit her to tell him, even if she offered to do so, without sac-

rificing his dignity. He would be in the insufferable position of a spoiled child who cries for something until he gets it. So he pulled himself together and managed to produce a remarkably lifelike grin.

"It's more than two years since it made any difference to me what you might write to Cleveland Pennell," he said.

"That's the first human expression and remark you have made in more than an hour," Julia said. "Now you're more like the real Lorrie."

But he was thinking that, with this amicable solution of the situation, it would now be possible, in the course of the evening, for Julia voluntarily to tell him what was in the letter. He knew it must be trivial, but he could not imagine what Julia could have to say to Pennell that would cover two full pages. To press the matter, however, would be only to humiliate himself, whether she gratified his curiosity or refused to do so. The wiser course was to pretend his interest had ceased, and then, he believed, considering her point won, Julia, womanlike, in a burst of confidence, would divulge her small secret.

The evening passed without this result, however, and as Hanscombe was preparing to retire, he decided to give his wife another opportunity to clear up the affair.

So, in dressing gown and slippers, he went again to her boudoir. She was at her dressing table, doing a mysterious something with her hair, and she looked very lovely. Laughingly, she tossed the long tresses in his face when he tried to caress her, and thus they played for a few moments. Finally, Hanscombe left her and began searching for something.

"What are you looking for?" Julia asked.

"Have you seen anything of the Post?"

"Why, no; I never bring it up here. It's probably in the library."

Still Hanscombe kept fussing about the room, and finally approached the desk. The bothersome letter lay there, stamped and ready to be mailed. He picked it up tentatively.

"Nosey!" Julia called at him.

He wheeled quickly, and realized that she had been watching him in the mirror. Flinging the letter down impatiently, he started for the door, but she hurried to intercept him.

"Now, Lorrie, you aren't going to spoil it all, are you?" she pleaded.

He stood rigid and silent, at a loss for an answer.

"I'll tell you what I am going to do," Julia said, after a pause. "That letter is not of the slightest importance, and I'm not going to tell you what is in it. It shall lie right where it is, and if you are so curious that you will not be happy until you know its contents, you can open it and find out for yourself any time you like. Truly, dear, I don't mind telling you, but it seems so childish." She paused, then put her arms around his neck, and whispered a few affectionate words to him.

Finally, Hanscombe gave a short, mirthless laugh.

"I guess I'm a bunch of nerves to-night," he said. "Too much society and office, and not enough golf. Good night, dear." And he kissed her tenderly and went out.

Julia sighed lightly, and resumed her preparations for retiring. But before turning out the lights, she put two sheets of blank paper in an envelope, addressed it, carefully comparing it in detail with the one that had caused the trouble, and left this dummy on her desk. The original she placed in the pocket of an automobile coat. Then, with a ripple of laughter, she went to bed.

In his own room, Hanscombe lay awake for an hour or more. At times,

he felt unworthy of Julia, and wondered why she had selected him out of the great number of men attracted by her wealth, her beauty, or her brains. At other times, he felt it almost an oppression of fortune to be the husband of a woman who attracted so many different kinds of men. Knowing his own shortcomings, it seemed in his pessimistic moments quite possible that eventually she would meet a man whose superiority would be so pronounced that she could not escape a realization of the contrast—so far short does even the much loved man often fall of understanding the heart of woman. This, he feared, would be the end of their ecstatic happiness, and they would then drift into the rut in which practically all other married people eventually found themselves. But that Pennell should be the man—pshaw! What an idea! Then there came over him a good, healthy nausea at his own eccentric reasoning, and, laughing inwardly at himself, he fell asleep.

For several days, Hanscombe gave the matter hardly a thought, and resumed the unclouded companionship that he and Julia had always enjoyed. He was honest enough with himself to know that a contributing factor to this was the demonstration of the casual nature of the letter. Certainly, had it contained anything of importance, or anything that called for concealment, Julia would not have left it where it was, at the mercy of his impulses. Thus curiosity was prevented from developing into jealousy by the fact that he noticed the duplicate letter from day to day on Julia's desk. Still, the curiosity remained, though it was dormant most of the time, and while prescriptions of "the hair of the dog that bit you" are frequently recommended by amateur physicians, curiosity is one disease that is not relieved through the sufferer's constantly seeing the thing that caused the infection.

So one afternoon, learning that Julia would not be home until late, Hanscombe decided to settle the matter once and for all, satisfy his curiosity, and swear never to be curious again. But he did not want Julia to know. This he justified on the ground that she should never have been secretive in the first place, and that her error in that respect justified similar surreptition on his part in learning the facts. So he carefully moistened the flap of the envelope, opened it, and discovered that it contained—two sheets of blank paper.

Hanscombe felt a chill of nameless fear pass through him. It never had occurred to him, when Julia had issued her challenge, that she would mail the letter and leave a substitute, its duplicate in appearance, as a decoy. That was a piece of daring that seemed incomprehensible. Why, it was a confession! Not only was she determined to get her message to Pennell, but it was of a nature that she did not want her husband to learn. Otherwise, she would have rewritten the note and left the first one, the bait for his curiosity, where it was. Obviously, she hoped, in fact, was quite confident, that he would not open the letter, or she would not have left it there with its accusing blank pages. But it was apparent that whatever might be the suspicions aroused by a possible discovery of the substitution, they were more desirable than that he should know the truth. Then what could that truth be? Hanscombe's brain refused to attempt to frame a definite theory.

What made the situation even more terrible, however, was that Julia never had been so affectionate and buoyant as in the last few days. She was constantly humming snatches of song, and frequently would come to him and begin romping in childish fashion. What could that mean in relation to this disclosure? Was her duplicity so thor-

oughly organized that she was capable even of covering it with this pretense of exuberant joy in his companionship? He could only conclude that Julia was either absolutely innocent or absolutely base. Yet he could no more believe her capable of wrong than he could explain away the circumstances that prevented him from feeling implicit faith in her. Thus, upon two small pieces of blank paper, he mentally built up an entire volume of evidence and deduction, the validity of which he himself doubted all the while, or at least with all his soul wanted to doubt. So he waited in the boudoir, by turns flinging himself into a chair and leaving it to pace the floor.

It was thus that Julia found him, nearly two hours later, as she entered the room, a radiant picture, flushed and breathless from running up the stairs.

"Hello, Lorrie," she cried. "What's the king doing in the queen's parlor, where she eats her bread and honey while he is in his countinghouse counting out his money?" she rattled on, as she flung off her wraps. Then, noting that he did not respond, she turned and looked at him inquiringly. "*Lorrie!*" she exclaimed, as she saw in his hand the envelope and the blank paper. "Oh, Lorrie," she went on reproachfully, "now you *have* gone and made a mess of things, haven't you? Really, I didn't think you'd do it—truly I didn't!"

"Yes," he said slowly, "I can see that."

"What do you mean?" she asked sharply.

"You didn't think I'd do it, but you thought it might be as well to take precautions, so as to be safe in case I did."

"Safe?"

With staring eyes, Julia looked at him, trying to find another meaning for his words than the only one she could discover. Had he not been blind to

everything but his own emotions, Hanscombe would have noted the proud poise of her head and the tremendous dignity of her bearing. They had never quarreled before. He would have preferred that she should break into weeping, admit some trifling fault, of judgment rather than of conduct, and ask to be forgiven. Since she did not do so, her attitude seemed to be one of defiance. He did not know how proud his wife could be, for her pride was not a militant thing, to be exercised upon other people, but a part of her being, to mold her own acts and keep them up to her ideals.

"Curiosity may be a besetting sin," Hanscombe continued callously, "but perhaps it needs one sin to catch——"

"*Loring!*" There was tragedy in Julia's voice, but it was tragedy with all banners flying. She went on more quietly. "Be careful not to say anything that we cannot both forget easily," she warned.

"All right; then please explain this." And he held out the evidence.

"Explain? Explain! There is nothing to explain. I wrote a note to Cleve Pennell, as you know. There was something I wanted to say to him or I would not have written it. You worked yourself up into a violent fit of curiosity, and I decided to test you and see if you could control it. I mailed the original note to Cleve because I wanted him to get it, of course, and I left the other one there to see if you were bigger than your curiosity." She went close to him, and took his hands in hers. "Don't you see—it was just a little joke on you, dear? I really didn't think you would open the envelope, and certainly I didn't think you would be angry, and—and—— But you're not jealous, not really jealous, are you, dear?"

Hanscombe at that moment would gladly have thrown the whole matter aside, taken his wife in his arms, and

forgotten everything concerning the letter. But it was physically impossible for him to let go. He had been so successful in screwing himself up to this tension that his best impulses had lost control over his actions. He could not help turning away a little as he said:

"I don't see why you could not have told me in the first place what the note was about, and saved all this fuss."

Julia flung his hands away from her, and walked the width of the room from him.

"All—this—fuss," she repeated slowly. "Why, can't you see that there is no fuss excepting in your own mind, that you have been piling it up and piling it up until you have created something out of nothing? Use your common sense and give me credit for a little ingenuity. It would have been quite simple, instead of putting blank paper in that envelope, to have written some perfunctory thing. That *would* have been deception."

"A very clever afterthought." There was almost a sneer in his voice.

"Lorrie," and there was a plaintive call in Julia's voice, "does all our happiness, all our love, mean nothing more to you than this? It isn't worth much if it doesn't build up a reserve of faith that will sweep aside such a little insignificant thing. Are you determined not to trust me? That is the only alternative."

"I do trust you," he said firmly, "but I can't understand what you have done."

"You—can't—understand. Very well, then, you shall understand. I thought we could clear all this away quite simply. But if you insist upon being stubborn, you have only yourself to blame for the humiliation you must undergo in consequence." With this, Julia started toward the door.

"Where are you going?" Hanscombe asked.

"I am going to telephone Cleveland Pennell to come here at once. There is no use now in my telling you what I wrote to him, for you would have no more reason to believe me than you would to trust me without an explanation. So Cleve shall bring the letter and show it to you. Perhaps you had better come, to see that I don't coach him over the phone."

"Julia—don't do that!"

"It's the only way. You made heroic measures necessary—now you must abide by the results. Aren't you going to come with me and listen while I talk to him?"

Mechanically, he followed her, trying to find words to persuade her to abandon the plan.

"This is Julia Hanscombe," she said, when Pennell had been located at his club. "Can you come to the house right away, just for a few minutes? I can't very well explain over the phone what I want. . . . Thanks, Cleve, if you will. And, by the way, will you please bring along that note I wrote you the other day? There's something in it I want to speak to you about. . . . Thanks—I shall be ever so much obliged. Good-by."

She left the phone, and confronted her husband.

"You have about ten minutes," she said in a voice so calm and even that it was unnatural, "to become yourself again and make this painful scene unnecessary."

"I do trust you, Julia," he said dully. "I do. It's all right."

"Your words say you trust me, but your voice only says you want to. We shall have to go through with it."

She led the way to the drawing-room, and they sat there in silence until Pennell arrived. He looked questioningly from one to the other, as he noted the coldness of his reception and the surcharged atmosphere of emotion.

"My husband," Julia began formally,

"happens to know that I wrote you a letter a few days ago, and by a peculiar set of incidents has become quite curious about it. Will you please show it to him?"

Pennell hesitated a few seconds. A serious quarrel between the Hanscombes, such as this promised to be, was not without certain possibilities that might be, from his viewpoint, very desirable.

"Is it necessary?" he asked. "Surely, Hanscombe, you don't think——"

"No, I don't think anything," Hanscombe blurted out. "And it is not necessary—not in the least. Julia and I had a little misunderstanding, and she insisted upon having you come. But I assure you I don't want to see the letter. I won't look at it."

"Then that seems to settle it," Pennell said.

"Excuse me," Julia interposed firmly. "It does not settle it in the least. It happens that the point has been reached where I am the one to be satisfied, and not my husband. I insist that you show him the letter, and if he will not read it, I will read it to him, and then leave it on my desk, where he can find it later and corroborate my version."

"Do you think it necessary—or wise?" Pennell was selecting his words carefully, and did not fail to note that Hanscombe looked up at him suddenly with an inquiring stare.

"What do you mean?" Julia asked. "Of course it is both necessary and wise. Please, Cleve, give him the letter."

"Well"—Pennell gave a short, uneasy laugh—"you place me in a rather awkward position. The fact is I destroyed the letter immediately after reading it."

"You destroyed it?" Hanscombe asked sharply.

"Yes—I never keep personal letters."

Julia looked from one to the other of the two men, who stood glaring at each other.

"Cleveland Pennell," she said at last, with the utmost deliberation, "I don't believe you. What are you trying to do? Make my husband believe there is a real basis for his absurd idea?"

"Please, Julia," Pennell said suavely, "you are not quite yourself or you would not make such a suggestion as that."

"If you had destroyed it, you would have told me when I phoned."

"It did not occur to me at the moment. And it seemed of no special importance."

Julia stepped to his side.

"I don't believe you. I am going to look in your pockets," she said.

"I am not accustomed to being doubted—or searched," he protested.

"I knew it! You have it with you," Julia declared. "Give it to me!"

Pennell looked into her eyes, and she looked back unwaveringly. What the man read told him that this was his last interview with her, whatever might be the outcome of the quarrel with her husband. It was still possible to soften his fall, so he decided to take the graceful way out of it.

"I hoped there might be another way," he said. "It will be rather a humiliating thing for Hanscombe, and I thought this could be avoided."

He handed the letter to Julia, who in turn handed it to her husband.

"You will find," she said, "that I remembered our second wedding anniversary will come next week. I wrote to Mr. Pennell, asking him to devise a way in which I could turn over all my property to you absolutely, so that the transfer could be complete by that date without your knowing about it. And now good-by. I don't want ever to see either of you again." She hurried from the room, her courage enduring just long enough for her to get out of their sight and hearing.

When she was gone, Hanscombe turned upon Pennell furiously.

"You devil!" he said. "You tried to make it worse instead of better!"

"You seem to forget," Pennell answered contemptuously, "that the whole thing was your own fault. The idea of harboring suspicions against a woman like that!"

"It wasn't suspicion—it was just my cursed curiosity at first, and then—a lot of imagination. And now she's gone. She'll not forgive this." Hanscombe sank into a chair, completely humbled.

"Gone? Don't be an ass! A woman never deserts a man merely because he makes a fool of himself over her. It's the maternal instinct to protect the

helpless. Julia has beaten you to a finish, but it is up to you to go to her and admit it and be properly forgiven. Good-by, old chap. I wish I didn't understand women so well—I might have a little better luck with them." And the villain of the piece departed.

Hanscombe sat there a long time after Pennell had gone, pondering gloomily upon what a slender framework he had erected his tower of unhappiness and wondering what would be the outcome. A tearful, wistful voice aroused him.

"Lorrie," Julia barely whispered, as she stood hesitating in the doorway, "Lorrie, I can't find my traveling bag."



DAME FASHION SUPPLANTS THE WIND

A SWIRLING, curling, twirling wind,
Wind of an elder day,
Right well I recall how you held me in thrall
With the goods that you used to display;
A pair of ankles, neat and trim,
The gleam of silk, the flash of lace,
A glimpse of daintiness, and slim—
You pleased the pulsing populace.

O happy, flappy, snappy wind,
(So you were wont to be)
You're out of a job since the styles raised hob
With the length of the skirt of the she.
A pair of ankles neat and trim,
The sheen of silk—and gone the lace—
Much more than *you* could do! The limb
Remains to dazzle with its grace.

O fruitless, bootless, lootless wind,
You are a useless thing;
You once had an "air" of the devil-may-care,
You caught pretty girls on the wing.
But now the fleeting sands of Time
Have stopped your work, made less your range;
You're but the shadow of your prime.
But stick around—the styles may change.

LYON MEARSON.



WADE was wealthy, middle-aged, and a lawyer; but more distinguishing and important than these facts of his life was his fourth dimension—Wade was clearing-house extraordinary to the “Wanderers.” Once he had been one of them, a distinguished geologist and explorer; once his papers had been events to the geographical societies the world over. Now an empty sleeve pinned across his chest, and his limping walk, gave reason for his indoor pallor, his wistful eyes, and the suite of office chambers whose windows commanded the reaches of the bay and the restless shuttling of the ships of adventure.

One side of the room in which he habitually sat was pigeonholed with deposit boxes. A sliding steel door, painted to imitate mahogany, concealed and protected them. Here reposed secrets, oddments, valuables, and bundles of letters and notes. The names neatly lettered on the faces of the boxes were many of them famous, some unknown, others emerging into the limelight of recognition; but they one and all represented the skirmish line of knowledge, of empire, of discovery.

The names on the first row, beginning at the top, were typical of the variety and meaning of all the rest. There was Wilson Kalin, the man who mapped darkest Persia; Siam Weadon, who had

botanized where none had botanized before him; Leroy, who claimed the discovery of new emerald mines in the mountains of Colombia; Devrees, who had correlated the dialects of the Filipinos; Camino, who had spent his life among the natives of the Hawaiian Islands, writing down their oral traditions; Benison, who, phonograph in hand, had recorded the songs and chants of the Ainu of Japan; Casteris, who had done nothing of note, having disappeared into the West African jungle some two years before; and, at the bottom, the square case marked “Alex Bannerman, Archaeologist.”

In Wade's desk were three small indexed volumes. Each bore the same words on the flyleaf: “In event of my death, or total disappearance for not less than five years, I wish the effects contained in my deposit box disposed of in the manner herein directed.” Followed the names of the depositors, the dates of their last departures, forwarding addresses, and probable length of absence.

Wade made no charge for his services as depository of secrets; it brought him what he wanted—the confidences of the men who followed the calling he had loved and still craved with all his heart. He heard strange, never-to-be-revealed-again stories, and tales of deeds that the future would mark as

turning points of progress. Nothing was too wild, too improbable, too fantastic for his ear. Anything might be true—was true. The diaries of travel that many of the boxes contained would shame the "Arabian Nights." Not a day passed but some bronzed soldier of science or fortune, active, restless, and erudite, sought Wade for counsel, and in return for his advice and assistance paid coin of vivid narrative of things without the ken of the captives of the cities. Desk-tied though he was, Wade was vicariously happy.

He was seated now at his worktable, an open dispatch box before him, his single hand deftly tying the last knots on a package of papers. He was interrupted by the office boy, a good-looking young Carib, who silently laid a card by his master. Wade glanced at it and nodded.

"Send him in."

The door to the outer office opened, revealing a tall, bearded man of uncertain age, alert in his movements and sharp of eye. Wade rose cordially.

"So you're off again, Bannerman?" he greeted. "I'm glad to see you. Sit down. Have a cigar."

"Yes," said the big man. "Back to Central America." He glanced at the package that, as yet unaddressed, bore the name of the Reverend Michael Eaton. "Ah, I see you're sending off young Eaton's stuff to his family. That's what I called to see you about."

"Yes," said Wade. "I was just going to address it when you came. He was a handsome boy—Eaton. Pity he had to get killed."

"Fact is," said Bannerman abruptly, "he isn't dead—or he wasn't when I saw him last. I lied to you."

"Indeed?" said Wade, without surprise. "What's the sense in making those poor old missionaries out in Fuchan believe their son is dead if he isn't? Unless," he added, "you left him

in a lunatic asylum, or something like that?"

Bannerman shook his head.

"Not a bit of it. He's as free as you or I—darned sight freer, in fact. Listen to the whole story, will you? And if you think I'm wrong in giving him out as dead, I'll run over to Fuchan and tell the old people myself that it was all a mistake. But I think I'd better talk it over with you, if you don't mind?"

Restlessly Bannerman got up and began pacing the room with automatic precision, as was his habit when trapped between walls.

"There were three of us on that jaunt—Eaton, Vedon, and I. Vedon doesn't matter much; he's one of the Frenchmen the government keeps prospecting around the tropics. Pretends to botanize, and all that sort of thing, but he's more of an engineer and prospector. Nice chap, interested in everything, but not scientific. He had a hunch he wanted to get into the wild country that lies between Antigua and Quezaltenango, so he was hanging around Guatemala City, waiting for some one to turn up who'd make up a party. It's ticklish business going alone. So when we showed up, he joined us.

"We got a dozen Indians from the free towns. They're a high type, and dependable; they've never been conquered by anybody, and they don't intend to be. We bought burros and found a good tracker, a boy who carried messages between the coffee plantations on the mountains, and who seemed to have a compass in his head and four pairs of eyes.

"This was Eaton's first expedition. He had just graduated from the Chicago University, and had taken his extra archaeology and ethnology at the institute. He went with me against the wishes of his father and mother, who wanted him to join them in China and go on with the mission work. But

Eaton told me frankly that he couldn't stand the gaff—he had no 'call.'

"All his young life he had spent with the Chinese. His parents had been so busy proselyting that they could give him only a little of their time. They had native servants whom they absolutely trusted, and those servants had brought him up. Chinese beliefs and superstitions had become so bedded in his childish mind that even when he was a man grown, he couldn't shake them off. Those early impressions amounted to something stronger even than heredity. He could not, he told me, associate with the Chinese except on a level of understanding and equality that would have utterly scandalized the old people and the whole missionary fraternity. Therefore, he had decided to keep away. They knew too little, he insisted, of the people they strove to teach, and he knew too much.

"So the upshot was, I took him. You know the ancient Persian story of the man who heard the angel of death receive command to bring him within three days, and who therefore fled to the farthest city, only to encounter at the gate the death angel, who smiled and told him that he had saved him the journey by coming thus to meet his fate? I think of that fable whenever I think of Eaton.

"Well, to get back to what happened, we started out in a general northeast direction from Antigua, the old ruined capital. It lies seventy-five miles from the coast, and eight thousand feet up in the air. We skirted the flank of the Volcan de Fuego, and turned sharp off into the valley that dips beyond. The tracker had such an unpronounceable name we called him 'Pedro.' He spoke good Spanish, far better than the mongrel patter of the free-town Indians, and it was from him that we learned of ruins hitherto unexplored by white men, which now we had determined to uncover for ourselves.

"Vedon was agreeable to any plans, so long as he traversed new country. He kept copious notes of the character of the soil, timber, mineral outcrops, and water power. Eaton was keen on everything. It was his first taste of the real wilderness and the untrammelled vigor of creation. It took his breath away. The sound of machetes slashing their way through the jungle was music to his ears. He thrived on hothouse smells. The grandeur of strange trees, big as circus tents, killing the sunlight and furnishing open spaces for the monkeys to play in, was an everlasting wonder to him.

"And all the while, he talked China to me; everything reminded him of something in the land where he was born. He described the age-old gardens of forgotten emperors, with their monumental pines and lily-choked ponds; he talked of bells of solid gold swinging aloft in haunted pagodas, and of the scream of snow leopards in the night. I began to realize that Eaton, for all his missionary parentage, was a—well, heathen, if you like.

"I realized, too, how far afield the Chinese had taken his childish steps. He used to laugh as he told me how, when his mother and father went down the river for a month or more, to attend conventions, and he was left with the faithful converts in the compound of the school, those trusted servants fled to the hills, visited weird temples, dwelt with their kin, conciliated some raving and greedy spirit or other, and then returned in time to meet the missionaries with polite obeisance. Of his wild journeyings he never spoke to any one, for the penalty would have been 'no more adventures.'

"When he was home in the mission, he had been lonely. There had been no white children to play with, and his intercourse with the native boys and girls had been limited to solemn meetings and school hours. But when the

wonderful runaway trips happened, he had been turned loose with innumerable little Ah-Sids and Ah-Yits and Suey-Gongs, and these intermittent adoptions had made up his real life. I've always held that the first seven years of the young of the human species is the determining period. It creates predispositions stronger than heredity, infinitely stronger than any later environment. Its impressions become kneaded, so to speak, into the very matter of the brain, become a part of the subconscious mind. Eaton was a perfect example.

"We had spent four days in the forest before Pedro got his bearings. Small blame to him; it was the most confusing country I ever saw. Then, too, an earthquake, which had occurred some months after Pedro's last excursion in that direction, had swallowed some of his landmarks and had substituted other natural phenomena—such as a geyser or two and a nest of hot springs—that completely upset his calculations.

"It was Eaton who first came upon the outposts of the ancient civilization. He plunged suddenly aside into a glade of wild coffee trees and threw himself on his knees before what looked like a mottled lump of lava rock. Pedro followed him with a grunt of approval. He explained we had come at last upon the '*Camino*,' the great road to the city the Indians called Cuantec. We gathered around Eaton, who was clawing at the rock, tearing away a wreath of vines that covered it.

"The thing revealed itself as a stone toad, with bulging eyes and leering lip. Down the back and sides were hieroglyphics. In its head was a cup-shaped depression, now filled with leaf mold. Eaton rose to his feet and looked at the monument with dazed eyes.

"I wonder why,' he said to me in a whisper, 'the damned thing seems so familiar?'

"I laughed at him and reminded him that the giant toad stones were famous and characteristic of the ancient unexplained civilizations of the Isthmus. He shook his head. But Pedro, having found his milestone, was for hurrying forward. He knew, he said, a place at once open and protected, and well supplied with water, where we could camp in comfort. Accordingly we pushed on. Half a mile farther on, we came upon another stone figure.

"The dragon,' Eaton explained.

"No,' said I. 'Haven't you eaten enough iguana steaks since you've been here to know a lizard when you see one? That's a two-thousand-year-old idea of an iguana.'

"Eaton shook his head.

"You can't tell me,' he said, 'that that creature is typical of all the ruins between here and Yucatan.'

"No,' I admitted. 'I never saw an Aztec or Maya or Toltec iguana before.'

"We walked on in silence for another hour.

"He had the jewel of wisdom in his claw,' said Eaton suddenly.

"Who had?' I asked foolishly.

"The dragon back there,' he said.

"That was a coconut form,' said I. 'There was a distinct ridging of the husk.'

"The color rings of wisdom,' he persisted.

"Vedon looked at us as if we had been a couple of madmen. He'd catalogued eighteen varieties of hardwood trees, the temperature of all the way-side springs, the prevalence of wild-coffee growth, the types of orchids, the richness of the soil, and the apparent absence of reptiles. For stone ones he had no interest whatever.

"We next encountered two more stone toads, facing each other about fifty yards apart, across a yawning chasm; and farther on a stone creature resting with knees doubled under.

"Look at that!" said I. 'A South American llama, as I live!'

"A camel," said Eaton, with a stubborn setting of his whole face.

"Eaton," I said, 'what nonsense! Think of the miles between here and a camel when that thing was carved! They'd never *seen* a camel—couldn't have. A llama, yes, perhaps.'

"Tradition," said Eaton. 'Look here. Don't you remember the lines of stone animals in north China, leading up to the tombs of the emperors? Camels and elephants, too. That's a camel,' he ended, with finality.

"Pedro led us off to the right and brought us to a little amphitheater, scooped either by nature or art—one couldn't tell which—in the side of the mountain. A stream trickled down the face of the rock, and was caught in a sort of basin of obviously artificial design. Under its scarf of ferns and vines, the wall showed unmistakable traces of picture writing. The path that led to this resting place continued on beyond, where traces of a wide-flagged roadway began. Opposite the cliff, the ground fell abruptly to the sea of tree-tops that assailed its foot like waves. But these waves bore foam of pink and yellow, blue and purple, as far as the eye could reach—the flowering of the vines that had climbed trunk and branch below to reach the sunlight.

"It was a wonderful place. We lighted our fire, got our food, picketed the burros, drank of the spring, and arranged to take watch and watch, one of the Indians taking the first hours of the night.

"It was the noonday sun that roused us, and when we gathered our scattered wits, we looked at each other in amazement. Gone was the amphitheater, the spring, the wide view. We lay in the hush of the forest, grouped around an immense stele of stone, a pillar twenty feet high at least, and covered all over like a totem pole with fig-

ures of men and beasts. I can't tell you how we felt. We couldn't all be crazy, or all have had an hallucination, and the only explanation was that we had been carried there in the night. But how, and by whom, and what for? We must have been drugged, every one of us, and soundly, too. Yet we felt none the worse for it. A bit heavy-eyed, perhaps, with a faint metallic taste on the tongue—that was all.

"Pedro confessed that the huge stone column that had marked our sleep like a headstone was new to him. He had no idea where we were. Then we began making discoveries. My pocket compass was gone. Eaton looked with amazement at his open palm. In it lay his pocket piece, a little disk of carved jade his Chinese nurse had given him 'for luck' before he was sent away to school in America, and which he always carried. Beside it lay a second piece of jade, discolored, olive-toned, 'tomb jade'; in other words, in the semblance of a bat—the ancient Chinese symbol of pleasure.

"The free-town Indians were grouped to one side. They chattered among themselves, wide-eyed and mystified, but seemingly without fear. Pedro spoke to them and turned with an exclamation of surprise.

"A quetzal!"

"Then we saw it—that rarest of birds, the almost extinct quetzal. It was a wonderful specimen. Its blue, iridescent plumage glittered like sapphire and emerald. Its tufted head ruffled; its long tail feathers jerked restlessly. It was fastened in a sort of tiny harness that clamped its wings to its body, and picketed by a woven-grass cord to a stake pressed into the ground, just behind the monolith. Pedro continued to gasp like a fish out of water.

"It is the royal gift," he sputtered. 'The Antigua men say no danger is meant to us.'

"I must own I was tickled to death

to possess a live quetzal. I didn't much care who had presented it. I pulled up the stake and took the bird in my hand. It seemed quite tame and eyed me inquisitively. Vedon it was who gave us a cue to at least one of the puzzles.

"We all drank the water of that spring," he said suddenly. "That's it, of course. It trickled down from the crown of the cliff. Any one up there could have poisoned it at its source. It must have been some new sort of an opiate, though."

"It was the only possible explanation, and we accepted it. But what we should do was not so easily settled. At last we determined to follow what looked like the line of least resistance through the jungle. There were still the mold-covered, broken evidences of heavy block pavement, and the faces on the pillar were all turned in one way. We pulled ourselves together and went on, the Indians ahead, cutting the interlaced lanas. We progressed very slowly. The stones were tilted at all angles by the prying growths of not-to-be-denied vegetation. It was hard going, and we found it easier to make headway at the side of the flagging, where at least we did not have the sharp angles of dressed stone to contend with.

"Eaton walked as if in a dream. Whenever we paused for breath, he took out his twin jade tokens and hypnotized himself with them. We were all marching in a sort of stupor, the result, perhaps, of the potion we had unconsciously taken. I own that nothing of that afternoon's happenings is very clear to me. But about sunset something occurred that jarred us wide awake.

"We emerged suddenly on an immense stone-paved square. The blocks were so gigantic that even the growth of the tropics could not rive them one from another. Before us rose a pyramid, broken and crumbled here and there, but substantially intact. The set-

ting sun hung at that moment exactly over the topmost square. It seemed to burn there, a divine fire on a vast altar. Then it sank slowly behind the pile of sculptured masonry, and the angles of its form were silhouetted sharply—five platforms, one above the other, the corners upcurved. Steps led up to each platform, narrowing as they mounted, a trick of the builder that immeasurably increased the impression of height.

"Vedon swore gently and delightedly in French, but Eaton gripped his hands on his folded arms till the knuckles were white.

"The pagoda of the sun," he said. His persistence irritated me.

"These pyramid forms are thoroughly Central American, but it *did* look like a pagoda, I had to admit—a descendant of a pagoda, a simplified, massed, degenerate pagoda, but still a pagoda. It was those five superimposed terraces and the uptilted cornices that produced the illusion.

"We'll stay right here," I decided. "Pedro, build a fire, and get plenty of wood and stack it here, in the middle of the square. If there's water, boil it—or, better, go and get it from a running stream. We passed a young river not long ago. They can't dope a whole brook."

"We ate and drank and lay down with a feeling of perfect security.

"Pedro piled plenty of fuel beside us, enough to last till dawn. I took the first watch myself, though I was vastly sleepy and outrageously tired. Vedon was to relieve me, and Eaton to follow him. There was silence over the jungle. Back of us a misty radiance of red gold announced the moon. A night bird with a singular bell voice began to call.

"Presently a strange, thin sound, as of a prologued twanging on one string, pierced the silence. It continued very low. I bent to listen. The direction seemed to be to the left. I rose very

cautiously and crawled in the direction of the sound, squirming around the prostrate forms of the Indians wrapped in their ponchos.

"A little breeze had sprung up, and the smoke from the watch fire blew down upon us. I noticed that the fire was low, and in order to warn whoever might be watching our bivouac that we were awake and watchful, I crossed and threw another armful of bush on the flames.

"Still the strange sound continued. It seemed to grow louder and more insistent. The smoke from the smoldering fire became dense. I coughed and tried to roll away from it, and I found I could not. The smoke had me. There was a queer smell of sandalwood and essences. I saw, or imagined I saw, shadowy human shapes approach. They formed a circle about us, moving with a rhythmic motion—all but one; the moveless figure of a girl, holding on her wrist a quetzal.

"That girl fascinated me. I could see her between the gusts of smoke that writhed ever blacker from our camp fire. It was as if the lethargy that bound me was influence rained from her strange eyes—long, narrow eyes, drawn back tightly to the temples. Yet she never looked at me. That unwinking gaze was fixed on Eaton. My numbed brain recorded this; and, furthermore, that the shadow shapes that turned and turned, ever approaching closer, paused in each circle at Eaton's feet. Then blackness engulfed me.

"Once more we awoke in the blazing heat of midday. Gone was the great stone square; gone the giant altar that had cradled the sun upon its summit. But our present situation was no less surprising. We lay on what appeared to be the roof of a vast building. The air was sharp with the peculiar thinness of altitude. All about us rose curious forms of hammered metal. The floor was inlaid with circles and tri-

angles and geometric forms. What looked like a terrestrial globe, of enormous circumference, bowed the back of an elephant pedestal. Everything gave the impression of inconceivable antiquity, and yet its preservation was perfect, as if isolation in that climate had protected the strange apparatus alike from nature and from man.

"Intricate instruments, delicately fashioned, but of immense size, were affixed to the parapets on all four sides. Everywhere there was picture writing, ideographs. Back of the open globe stood a carved stone seat, and upon it sat Eaton, sleeping. At his feet a gorgeous quetzal sunned itself, its head sunk upon its breast, its wonderful tail feathers spread out on the inlaid floor.

"By this time, I'm free to own, I felt so helpless that I had no desire to stem the tide of invisible will that was bearing us irresistibly somewhere. But it was evident to me now that it was Eaton the mysterious powers wished to honor. All the rest of us—Vedon, myself, Pedro, and the Indians—had been laid out prone on our faces before him, like a row of prostrate prisoners from an Egyptian frieze. He alone sat enthroned, the quetzal at his feet. In his limp hand a wand had been placed; its tip rested on a group of incised stars on the pavement. Even as I watched him, he opened his eyes. They rested without surprise on the weird objects around him. He stirred, looked again, and I saw his lips move.

"The scenery has been shifted again," I said.

"He looked at me.

"I don't understand," he said. "This is the top of the old observatory of astrology at Peking."

"Indeed?" I said. "Wake up."

"But he was awake. He looked at the wand in his hand and followed its direction to the marks in the stones below.

"I've seen things like that often and

often,' he said dreamily, 'when the astrologers were at a wedding or a birth in China. It's a belief as old—as—old'—he seemed still heavy with sleep—'as the world. How did we get to Peking?'

"I went to him, shook him by the shoulders, and explained in words of one syllable.

"He walked with me obediently to the parapet, which was high, and we looked over. I had expected to find that we were on the top of some tall building, and was amazed when the ground appeared not six feet below. Broken stone scrap, in all directions; then the jungle again—but the jungle of altitude, which is as different from the torrid jungle as day from night.

"Eaton and I were fully recovered, but Vedon and the others took hours to arouse. Vedon was disgusted when he regained his faculties. Pedro was frankly frightened. But the strutting quetzal, in all his jewellike beauty, seemed to be sufficient guarantee to the Indians. They were content, even eager, as if they had received promises of reward. They treated Eaton with awe.

"It's something to do with this jade,' Eaton said. 'It was in my hand again when I woke up. It's nothing very wonderful; it isn't even old. It's just the everlasting symbol of good fortune and long life. It must be—just because it's Chinese.'

"I remembered the vague circling forms of the night before. I recalled the face of the girl, immobile and expressionless, but I said nothing.

"You're hipped,' I murmured half-heartedly.

"Am I?' said he, and he placed in my palm a square cornelian seal surmounted by a dog of 'Fo.' Its surface was worn smooth as a cabochon ruby from age and use. It was Chinese beyond all possible doubt. 'In my other hand,' he said.

"His voice was detached, his look

was remote; he had receded from us, from our experiences, from our points of view, from physical contact with us. You've seen a hypnotic subject, haven't you? Well, he was something like that in remoteness, and yet it seemed of his own desire, as if he obeyed no compulsion, but his inner self. The whole thing was so fantastic, and yet such a logical progression, that even then I sensed the end.

"Let's eat here—now,' he suggested, 'and then go on.'

"He assumed command of the expedition, and without question we obeyed. Ten broad steps gave us egress from the astrological terrace—for I take Eaton's word for it that such it was. We descended, scrambled over the loose shale, and followed along a straight avenue, perfectly defined and hedged by the most gigantic tropic trees I ever saw. Eaton carried the two impossibly beautiful birds on his wrist, where they perched falconlike. At intervals we passed carved stele and portentous beasts of stone. A great gateway, whose sculptured top had fallen, barred our way, then another and another. One showed faint traces of color in its incised depths. All bore the characters that could have revealed so much if only we had had the key to its symbols.

"With Eaton in the lead, we stumbled along. Sudden twilight came, but Eaton did not stop. Another hour, in which we advanced slowly in velvet darkness, and then the moon rose.

"A shrill scream brought us all to a halt, all but Eaton. He walked on with his rhythmic step.

"The snow leopard,' he said.

"I had just sense enough to object.

"We're not in northern Manchuria. I'll grant you anything else—that we're on the track of some living remnant of the lost civilization that was brought here ages ago from the Orient. But that they imported snow leopards—no!"

"I know the cry of the snow leopard," said Eaton. "Perhaps it is crying in Manchuria and we heard it here."

"His eyes glittered, and he spoke recklessly, as if to put a term to my objections by any supposition, no matter how wild.

"Again!" he exclaimed.

"The cry shrilled close at hand. I loosened my revolver; Vedon swung his rifle to his arm; the Indians drew closer about Pedro; but we moved on, our shadows preceding us in gigantic parody.

"The moon made all things clear as day, sharply defined, yet mysterious. The avenue ended abruptly as we passed under another towering gate. Before us lay an immense circle of carved stone, in its center a hole, for all the world like a Titan's grindstone. One look at it, one glance at the great oblong on which I trod, and which bore the outline of a giant face, and I knew this cycloplan wheel to be the immense counterpart of that never-deciphered Aztec calendar that rests now in the City of Mexico. A sharp black shadow crossed the circle and rested, immovable as a rod of iron, on the face of the disk, its tip indicating one of the subdivisions of the cycles—a colossal moondial, that revealed I know not what of time or fate.

"Beyond the outermost ruin bulked, white as snow in the violent moonlight, a long, low building. Something stirred within the yawning door, and a figure stood revealed against the dark within. The girl!

"She seemed the manifestation of some long-dead artist's vision of Egypt's Astarte, of China's Kuan-Yin, of India's Draupadi—and yet different; all these, and with them the flavor of the Aztec, the Maya, the Toltec. She was little and slender. Her body shone in the moonlight as if covered with gold leaf. Her downcast eyes were long and uptilted, drawn toward the tem-

ples; her mouth was small, with the lower lip accentuated. Across her brow was a band of quetzal feathers, upstanding like a crown. A collar covered her bosom. Her hips were swathed in a bulky wrapping that glittered blue with quetzal feathers. Enormous rings depended from her ears. Her long, slim hands were heavy with rings, and to her wrist clung a quetzal.

"She advanced, holding out her arm, with its living jewel of good will. We stood moveless as she came. Then, from the dark behind her, another shape appeared, advancing with measured tread, keeping his distance—a warrior, his face stained and painted, his headdress flaunting long plumes that nodded—the headdress of a Chinese general, as one sees it in the ancient paintings. His garments—collar, mantle, and high leg coverings—sparkled with plates of metal. He held in leash two leopards. Believe it or not—they were snow leopards. They were half the size of the Manchurian beast. They were curiously changed, as time and climate changes a breed, but the long body, the cheetahlike head, the heavy tail, thickening at the tip, could not be mistaken; they were the descendants of snow leopards.

"Eaton stepped forward eagerly as the girl drew near. He leaned toward her, thirsting for her first word.

"She raised her eyes and looked at him. Then she spoke—a singsong chant; and Eaton answered her—yes, he answered her. It was easy to see, however, that the understanding was not perfect; there seemed a hesitation for words and an adjustment of pronunciation.

"I drew close to Eaton. I put my hand on his shoulder. He shuddered.

"What is she speaking?" I asked.

"Chinese," he said shortly.

"What is she saying?" I insisted.

"When we were drugged, her peo-

ple searched us. They found my jade token!

"I saw myself, then, hailed as the great discoverer of the lost race. I saw myself returning to civilization with the key to the great cipher of Mitla, Cholua, Tuxpan, and Querigua in my pocket, with the translation of the calendar stone and ten volumes of notes on manners and customs.

"She asked a question in her curious, halting song, and Eaton answered it. Again she spoke, and the warrior behind her struck the pavement with his spear. There filed from the doorway before us a procession of warriors—twelve in all. Four in the center bore a huge basin, by four rings; the others carried metal cups in the shape of the traditional ceremonial cups of China. I did not want to drink that brew. I think none of us did, though its savor was pleasant and it reeked of spices. But the look on Eaton's face warned me to obey. He had met his angel of fate; he had—you can't say reverted to type, for he'd diverged from it—but reverted to the past that had always held him.

"To him, at that moment, our party, all of us, Europeans and Indians alike, were dangerous intruders, to be done away with. The Indians looked at the quetzal on the woman's wrist and made no demur. Vedon drank, cursing softly. I drank in silence a '*Vale*' to Eaton.

"How shall I make you see what I saw when next I awakened? The whole color of it is the color of dream things. Its facts are such mad, fantastic unreality. But I can see it all now, if I close my eyes—a vast view of gardens, terraced; on each terrace a huge lily-choked pond, bordered by stone railings of curious design. From the grass bank where we lay, a huge sculptured wall upreared, and still it soared beyond a first giant parapet until it terminated in a temple roof, from which swung

long garlands of metal plaques that met and clanged with vague, sonorous music. Below and about us, the deep blue of before dawn wrapped everything, like the presage of light in the heart of a vast sapphire.

"We faced the east, for before us, slowly, the miracle of sunrise was taking place. One by one the lily pools paled and lightened; the closed petals of the pink lotus opened. As the light grew, I realized that Vedon was beside me, but he slept. Pedro and the Indians, a little apart, lay like dead men in their drugged slumber. There was no sign of Eaton.

"Suddenly the sky flushed rose and gold and opal, like the moist heart of a pearl shell; a gleam of white fire touched the horizon. From what seemed the clouds above broke a hymn of greeting. Its wild cadence mingled with the beat of wooden blocks, the hollow clapping of gourds, and the sustained note as of one string struck constantly. I looked up.

"There on the parapet they stood—two lines of warriors, armed with bows, their enormous waving headdresses silhouetted against the pale sky. And between the two divided ranks stood Eaton and the girl. She was clad as I had seen her when she trod the way of her fate on the calendar stone. To her left wrist the quetzal still clung. Her face was inscrutable—the smiling Kuan-Yin, with veiled, unrevealing eyes.

"Eaton was Eaton no longer. He was a warrior prince of the days before Confucius, a prince of the days of legend, when Kuan-Yin walked the earth. The quetzal headdress bound his brow; the skin of a snow leopard half concealed the shining scale breastplate; the skirts of his mantle were emblazoned with the quetzal, which was strangely one with the sacred Ho-o of China. The dragon, which was now part giant lizard, writhed across the

banner unfurled above his head. His blue eyes were shining, his young face ecstatic, and in his hand he held a scepter of jade. It was all like a vision, and like a vision it vanished. The waves of darkness closed over me, while yet the chant beat in my ears, and the tinkling music of the golden-swinging temple bells.

"We were kept drugged for how long we had no means of ascertaining, but it must have been days; for when we came to, by the second bowl of the hot springs of Santa Rosa, two days' travel from the town of Quezaltenango, we found ourselves, so to speak, in the middle of next week. To each man's hand was tied three tokens—an ingot of gold, a quetzal feather, and an obsidian knife—a gift, a reminder, and a threat.

"Of course, I'm going back, or I'm going to try to, though, as you can

easily understand, I haven't even an idea of the general direction to help me. Still, there's the chance. But what could I say to those old missionaries out there in Fuchan? That while they were saving heathen souls they gave a heathen soul to their own child? It would kill them. They'd blame themselves, and sit in ashes; they'd know their boy in hell fire, and believe themselves to blame for it. The story can never reach them through Vedon; he knows nothing about Eaton. It wouldn't be *decent* to tell them, would it, Wade?"

"No," said Wade slowly. "You're right. Eaton is dead."

Bannerman drew a long breath of relief. Wade looked longingly out of the window at the shuttling ships of adventure.

"Gad! How I wish I were with him!" he murmured.



INTO THE FAIRWAY

I AM afraid to be so happy, dear—

I am afraid of days and ways serene.

This is the flesh of dreams that comes so near,

This laughing, hearth-fire love; for we have been
As two who sail a harbor in a mist

And know that lights are burning thick and gold
The other side, for others. We have kissed

Where lip must grope for lip, and where the cold,
Still darkness waits for those who love and roam

Beyond the charted course. We longed to cast
Back to love's fairways—folkways, too—a home,
A garden, babies. Channel's clear at last!

But through the dark you held me, close and tight.
Promise you will not lose me in the light.

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poitiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

RACHEL: THE WOMAN OF FIRE

SHE was ugly, but men turned in droves from fairer women and flocked to do homage to her. She was mercenary and stingy, but she went broke in giving her wealth away. She was void of morals, of manners, of mercy, but she outshone women who were rich in all three. She was unutterably bad, and yet, in a way, unutterably good. She was a guttersnipe and a genius—a mass of the wildest contradictions. She was Elisa Rachel Félix. Your grandparents knew her as "Rachel"—pronounce it "Ra-shell," won't you, please?—and they thrilled at her marvelous art; even as they shuddered at the scandalous story of her life.

I am going to tell you that same scandalous story. But before you read it, just remember that dear old pretango, ante-cocktail grandma used to shudder a great deal more easily than you can hope to. It is hard to find

many shockable things in 1916. For all that, Rachel's story won't bore you by any close resemblance to the careers of Mrs. Felicia Hemans or Joan of Arc.

She was born in Mumpf, a Swiss village, in 1820. Her father, Jacob Félix, had started out to be a rabbi, but his foot had caught in the hem of a skirt and he had become a peddler instead; a rather superior peddler, as peddlers go—until he undertook to add his daughter to his list of hawkable wares. Her mother, Esther Haya, was a horrible old woman.

The peddler and peddlerette used to travel around the country in a cart, with their rabbit family of offspring. Race suicide they had never heard of, and it would have meant nothing to them if they had. I don't know how many children they had, first and last. But there were no less than six, who were for the most part less than a

year apart in age—Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, Dinah, Leah, and Raphael. Most of these were later married to people whose names read like a Hungarian wine list.

The Félixes did not believe in spoiling children through idleness. So, as soon as Sarah and Rachel were fairly able to walk, they were taught to sing and dance and twang the guitar for coppers. The rest of the brood did their own share in the family upkeep, too; even to the baby, a sickly little mite who was rented out to a costermonger and tied to the latter's barrow to excite pity and pence.

The peddler drifted from Switzerland to Lyons, and thence to Paris, to filthy lodgings in the tangle of old lanes behind the Hotel de Ville. Here Papa Félix found pupils who were willing to pay a few sous for German lessons. In his spare moments, he hawked cheap opera glasses. His wife ran an old-clothes business. The children were sent out to dance, sing, and beg. No efficiency manager was needed by the Félixes. There was absolutely no waste.

They came to Paris in 1831. If eleven-year-old Rachel still had any of the innocent illusions that are childhood's birthright, she speedily mislaid them in the Paris gutters. Perhaps she tried to keep straight; perhaps not. If she did, the struggle was thrown away. At a later day she summed up any possible effort of this sort by saying:

"They let a girl starve to death while she is pure; but they bury her under rifts and attentions as soon as she has lost—what she can never win back!"

One day, in the early eighteen-thirties, she was amusing a street-corner audience and coaxing pennies from them by singing an utterly disreputable ballad of the slums. A passer-by halted, picked her up in his arms, and gave her a franc and a sheet of manuscript, saying:

"Baby, I love children—and I love clever children best of all. You are clever. You are a born artist. But stop singing such damnable songs. They soil your mouth. Here's something better. I wrote it myself. It will go nicely to that same tune. Take it and sing it."

He set her down and went on. Rachel stared after him, much more impressed by the silver franc than by anything else in the adventure.

"I wonder who he was," she said aloud, carefully depositing the money in her ragged stocking.

"That man?" queried a corner loafer. "Oh, that's just a crank anarchist and a scribbler. His name's Hugo. Victor Hugo."

It was only a few days afterward that another illustrious Frenchman paused to watch Rachel's street performance, and was struck at once by the almost uncanny artistry of the child. He was Choron, master of the Conservatoire of Sacred Music.

Choron fell into talk with her, and wound up by offering to take her into the conservatoire and teach her to sing.

"You can learn to lift your voice to the glory of our Lord," he added, by way of pious inducement.

"And then will there be a chance for me to go around and take up a collection?" she demanded eagerly.

But, in spite of Choron's sorrowful negative, she had sense enough to seize the chance. And to the conservatoire she went—as soon as Félix had been assured that it would cost him nothing.

Wise old Choron quickly saw that Rachel would make only a tolerable singer, but that she had the germ of marvelous ability as an actress. He turned her over to Saint-Aulaire, a teacher of declamation and a sterling actor, who recognized her genius and set to work with a will to develop it.

The first result of his teachings was to make Rachel crazy about the poem

plays of Racine. To gratify this craving, she stole her mother's umbrella, pawned it, and bought a dog-eared copy of Racine.

For years she labored feverishly at her new art. She supported herself, meantime—she best knew how. At last, in 1836, she secured admittance to the Conservatoire of Acting. Her chief teacher there was Provost. She took an instant dislike to him, and he to her. He could see no talent at all in the fallow-faced, mystic-eyed child. For which very good reason he was not able to bring out any of her talent. He bullied her. She answered back or sulked. One day, in rage at a flash of her gutter repartee, he howled:

"Go back to the streets, where you belong!"

"To the streets?" queried Rachel, with a calm so ominous that he hurried to modify the dirty insult by saying:

"Go back to the streets and sell flowers. You might succeed as a flower girl. You'll never be an actress."

Years and years afterward, Rachel stood swaying and panting before the curtain of the Théâtre Française, while the house yelled and clapped itself into a frenzy and hurled flowers at her feet. She caught a glimpse of Provost in a stage box. Snatching up an armful of the votive bouquets, she strode toward him, snarling in feline rage:

"Monsieur Provost, the girl who 'will never be an actress' entreats you to save her from starving by purchasing a few of these flowers!"

After her clash with Provost, Rachel left the conservatoire—at the management's request. But she did not go "back to the streets"—at least, not avowedly—nor did she try to sell flowers.

By this time, she was nearly seventeen. Also, she was bony, angular, homely. Yet already the mystic superwoman spell radiated from her. Her

wonderful eyes—her only beauty—burned themselves into the heart of Monval, an actor, who thereupon became her first recognized lover. His influence won her a job at the Gymnase.

The salary was beggarly, but it was more money than she had ever earned before. And her parents—who had welcomed the affair with Monval, as a stepping-stone to a livelihood—ordered her to accept it. She made her stage début on April 24, 1837, at the Gymnase, under the name of "Rachel," in *La Vendéene*, a "vaudeville," by Paul Dufort.

And she scored an instant and stupendous failure.

They tried her once more, this time in "La Marriage de Raison," and once more she failed. For a year she had to content herself with small parts and with fretful loafing.

Yet she did not consider the year thrown away; not because she was steadily perfecting herself in her art, but because her charm was beginning to outweigh her ugliness, and she was learning the mysterious power of drawing men to her feet. Which she found not only pleasant, but profitable. Here is a description of her, a pen picture drawn at about this period:

"She was of middle height and very thin. But she dressed with a skill so subtle as to make of this excessive thinness an added charm. She was graceful of gesture and of walk, with beautiful hands and feet. Her eyes, while not large, were very deeply set, and burned with a somber fire. Her pretty forehead was low, and her small head set gracefully upon a perfect throat. Her voice was of compelling power, a contralto, which she used with exquisite skill, though it was not of great compass. In short, though not really beautiful, she was full of distinction and charm. She was called ugly, then beautiful. In point of fact, she was neither one nor the other, but both,

according to the day, the hour, the thoughts which dominated her."

Edwin Forrest summed up Rachel to perfection in his famous prophecy:

"That little Jewish girl, that little bag o' bones with the marble face and the flaming eyes—there is demoniacal power in her. If she live and do not burn out too soon, she will become something marvelous."

And she did. She became "something marvelous." And quickly thereafter she proceeded to "burn out."

Berryer, a great lawyer of his day, now fell victim to Rachel and took her under his protection. Soon afterward, she met the author actor, Samson, to whom she proceeded to enact Delilah. Samson paid to have her educated, gave her lessons in acting, and presently found her a position at the Théâtre Française at the munificent salary of eight hundred dollars a year.

He took her to a performance at the Française. The man at the box office, after one look at her shabby clothing, tried to send her to the top gallery.

"Be careful how you treat her," Samson gayly warned him. "She'll soon be in a position to put you out of your job if she doesn't like the color of your hair."

Rachel haunted the Française. She made the life of Vedel, the manager, a burden until she wheedled him into giving her a chance to act. At last, in June, 1838, Vedel put her on as *Camille* in "Les Horaces." It was a safe move, for every one was out of town and the failure would not reflect greatly on the management. The curtain went up on an all but empty house.

The curtain came down with the handful of spectators howlingly acclaiming Rachel the greatest actress on earth. She had found herself. Under her magic, the waning old classic school was reborn. Said Viron, the only first-class critic in the night's audience:

"This weird, uncanny child will be the pride and glory of the theater!"

Janin, France's foremost critic, heard of the new star's rising. He scuttled home from the country to be present at her next performance, to make or break her at a word. He sat through the play, then wrote a criticism that began:

"This time we find ourselves in possession of the most astounding and amazing little girl the present generation has ever seen on the boards of a theater. This genius—take note of her name—is Mademoiselle Rachel."

The public agreed with him. Rachel's success was made. In tragedy, she was unequalled. In comedy, she was mediocre. But for years thereafter the theatrical world was her slave.

The good Papa Félix rejoiced clamorously over his daughter's triumph. When Vedel raised her salary from eight hundred dollars to four thousand dollars, the dear old father's bliss was bounded only by a desire to get more. He seized for himself, of course, every franc she earned by her acting at this time, since she was not of age. And he let her support herself as best she could, by the devotion of her admirers. He was anything but shiftless in money matters.

Vedel, voluntarily, had given the girl genius the raise from eight hundred dollars to four thousand dollars. Félix called on the manager next day and demanded eight thousand dollars for her. Vedel ventured to remind him that her contract called for only eight hundred dollars. Félix laughed tolerantly at this feeble repartee, and, snapping his fingers under Vedel's nose, said:

"Contract with a minor? She's my daughter, and I mean to get money out of her. Pay, or I'll go to law!"

Notice the Shylockian combination of "daughter and ducats."

Vedel's answer was very much to the point.

"Get out of my sight, you rat!" he yelled. "And never let your shadow darken that door again!"

Félix was no warrior. He retreated.

And now that we have launched Rachel on her stage career, suppose we turn to her loves.

Janin, for one, had fallen in love with her. One day in the greenroom he tried to put his arms about her. This was no novelty to Rachel. But Janin seems, for some reason, to be "the only man she ever loved." She repulsed his pretty show of affection by striking him in the mouth. She was no monopolist, you see. There must always be exceptions in every line of endeavor. And Janin was Rachel's exception. A costly bit of exclusiveness it was for her. For the great critic promptly turned his press batteries loose upon her, and was forever thereafter trying to "discover" some tragedienne to usurp her place in the public heart.

Janin attacked Rachel in print. A defender speedily answered him, declaring Rachel peerless. Naturally, the actress took a certain interest in discovering the writer who had formed so just an estimate of her. She made inquiries, and learned that her admirer was the renowned Alfred de Musset, super-poet, darling of women, arbiter of dress, official lover of Georges Sand. Rachel invited him to supper.

This supper party was quite the biggest social affair Rachel had known. Actors, artists, writers, clubmen, came to it. I don't know who paid the bill. It seems certain that Rachel didn't. That was never her way. She even tried to capitalize the pleasant little evening by merrily offering for auction a cheap ring some one had given her.

The bidding was gallantly lively. The

price was quickly run up to four thousand francs. De Musset, alone of all the guests, did not bid. He had spent the early part of the evening at Rachel's side, cutting out every other guest. But when the question arose of paying eight hundred dollars for a seven-dollar ring, he relapsed suddenly into a poetic brown study, deaf to all the racket around him.

Perhaps this was prudence. Perhaps it was the utmost cleverness. If you buy a dog of good breeding and want to win his whole-souled devotion, don't begin by petting him overmuch or crowding him with attention. If you do, the chances are that he will never learn to care for you to any great extent. Let him alone, merely permitting him to see that you are his master and that you are not especially interested in him—and there is every prospect that he will discover in a few days that he worships you above all mankind.

I make no claim to understanding women, but I have such slight knowledge of dogs as forty-odd years of close study has given me, and the foregoing is true. De Musset, too, understood dogs, and he owned many of them. That there can be any similarity between a woman's love and a dog's love is, of course, out of the question, as I am sure De Musset would have been the first to declare. Yet De Musset, who understood dogs, remained silent and aloofly indifferent, while all the men around him were flattering Rachel by making idiotic bids for her pinchbeck ring.

Rachel glanced at him from time to time, as the bidding waxed hotter. He paid no attention to her looks of curiosity, of pique, of appeal. At last, in desperation, she came up to him, brandishing the ring and exclaiming:

"Four thousand francs are bid for this! What do *you* bid, poet? What do you offer me?"

"My heart," was De Musset's careless answer.

"The—the ring is yours!" she cried, throwing herself into his arms.

The other guests went home.

Rachel, at last, was in love. It was a pretty idyl, this romance of the great poet and the greater actress. It would be still prettier if her love had been as exclusive as it was intense. But Francis Gribble—her most trustworthy biographer—records that throughout the De Musset affair she was reaping heavy cash dividends from other adorners.

While the liaison was in its first rush, Rachel came of age. This freed her, to some extent, from old Félix's grip. Though she still gave her parents enormous sums of money, she was able to spend some of her income on herself. The first use she made of her freedom was to take a villa at Montmorency. She invited De Musset to pay her an indefinitely long visit there, and, incidentally, to write a play for her in his spare moments. He accepted the invitation—the play was duly begun, but never finished—and the two lovers revelled in the bliss of being alone together in the country.

For a few days, they thought themselves in heaven. De Musset wrote delightedly to a friend:

"She is running about her garden, her feet in my slippers!"

It was the poor girl's first taste of real happiness. But it was just a taste, for the serpent was soon installed in the ready-made garden of Eden. He appeared in the form of brandy, absinth, and beer—mixed!—a frightful concoction that De Musset used to drink in huge quantities, to the disgust of his fastidious little sweetheart.

Moreover, a chronicler tells us: "There were other suitors occasionally succeeding in unlocking the doors of her villa with golden keys."

Yes, Rachel sold herself with much

profit. She never let love interfere with finance.

De Musset found her out. There was a fierce quarrel. He wrote her despairing farewell verse, and left her for another inamorata—the Princess Belgiojoso.

Three years later, he and Rachel met by accident at a Paris dinner party. Rachel flashed upon him her irresistible smile and said softly:

"Well, are you still cross?"

"If you had but asked that question three years ago!" sighed De Musset.

"What a lot of time and happiness we have lost!" she rejoined.

So De Musset again became her recognized lover. During their three years' separation, Rachel's immoralities had made her no less famous than had her acting. But this seems to have been no deterrent to De Musset. It would have been a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Apparently, they decided to ignore each other's pasts and to start afresh.

Within a few weeks, though, they quarreled again—this time because De Musset was writing a play for Rose Chéri. He relented, tore up the play, and began to write one for Rachel. But she was still hotly jealous. There were more quarrels. At last, De Musset could stand it no longer. He put away the half-written play in a drawer, apostrophizing it thus:

"Farewell, Rachel! It is *you* I am burying!"

With which plagiarism from Mürger, he strolled out of the actress' life, this time to stay out of it.

His successor in her easily rented affections was Doctor Veron, an elderly physician who had made a fortune by patenting a cough drop. Veron loved her deeply, and showered his wealth on her. He realized the vast difference in their ages, and he did not exact too much of the wild, high-strung girl. He tolerated her other affairs,

stipulating only that he should not be made ridiculous. Rachel did not obey these easy conditions. She behaved very badly. In fact, she soon took Veron and his gifts as a matter of course, and forgot him except when need of funds thrust his memory upon her notice. We'll hear more about him later.

Stingy as she was, except in her dealings with her greedy family, Rachel now began to spend money lavishly in an effort to get into society. Not only cash did she squander in this pursuit, but charm as well. Among the men she enslaved were the all-powerful Ducs de Noailles and De Richelieu and Count Walewski. The count, by the way, was the son of Napoleon Bonaparte and the dainty Polish Countess Marie Walewski of tragic memory.

These notables, and others, acted as Rachel's sponsors and swung wide for her the almost unopenable gates of the Faubourg St. Germaine, vouching there for her absolute respectability.

Some biographers say that she moved, in the presence of great writers and exalted personages, with the air of a queen; others that she was a gamin. The truth is she could behave perfectly when she chose, but she did not often choose. To such an actress as Rachel, it was a comparatively simple thing to acquire the manners of the Faubourg St. Germaine, but her craving always was to revert to those of the gutter from which she sprang.

Once, for example, after a thrillingly tragic impersonation of *Virginie*, she was found—by a lady of rank who had condescended to come behind the scenes to call on her—dancing a can-can in her dressing room, still clad in *Virginie's* classic garb.

Again, a duchess put the final *cachet* on Rachel's admission to society by publicly taking her to drive in an open carriage in the Bois. Rachel was tearfully grateful. On their return, the

duchess kissed her good-by. Once outside her hostess' drawing-room, Rachel turned and derisively spread her fingers, fanwise, in front of her nose. The duchess' daughter saw her do it. And another promising door was closed upon the would-be society actress.

But, despite these setbacks, she won her place in the Faubourg. Great women delighted to honor her, even as great men delighted to do the reverse. She was a welcome guest at divine old Madame Récamier's salons; she recited "Esther" for the Archbishop of Paris; the Duchesse de Noailles was her avowed patroness.

Then it was that she realized how badly her early life had equipped her for such a lofty position. At first, she dodged many educational bog holes by hiring her lawyer, Crémieux, to write all her social letters for her. But she soon began to study such things for herself; as witness a vilely misspelled note to Crémieux:

I expect you think me an awful nuisance, but in a few months I shall be able to write all that sort of thing for myself; only my studies aren't finished yet, and I hope you won't drop me before they are. I know now how to accept an invitation to dinner, and I shall soon know how to accept invitations to evening parties, and then my course will be complete.

Queer confession for a queen of tragedy, who was everywhere congratulated on "having saved the French language from destruction at the hands of Hugo and the vandals"!

In 1841, Rachel crossed the Channel and captured England. She made a stupendous hit there as *Phèdre* and *Marie Stuart*. The critics praised her to the skies. It amazed her beyond expression that the English critics sought no reward for their praise. She was unused to such disinterestedness, and overjoyed at the money saving it entailed.

In a letter to Crémieux, almost the one friend for whom she had an hon-

est, cleanly liking, she told of her triumphs; notably her "command appearances" before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, and a little chat with the queen, at the end of which Victoria gave her a bracelet.

She wrote her name in the queen's autograph album, at the royal request. After she had gone, Victoria characterized her as "such a nice, modest girl." Luckily for Rachel, the queen did not know that she had scarcely left the august presence when the gutter-snipe reasserted herself and she kicked her heels high in the air.

About this time, Rachel's health began to fail, and the first sign of the disease that was to cause her death appeared. She wrote to Crémieux:

I have spent four days in bed, and feel very weak. The name of the disease is hemorrhage.

Evidently she did not realize its seriousness, for she treated her illness very lightly. It followed her up, however, and during a triumphant tour through the French provinces—where she played to packed houses at every performance—another letter to Crémieux and his wife alludes to "a pain between the shoulders." And she adds, "I cannot use my left arm without feeling it." Consumption had begun to flaunt in her white cheeks its hectic "No surrender!" banner.

The course of her provincial tour took her to her old home, Lyons, and though she returned thither as a queen, the place brought up miserable memories. A gloom was falling upon her. She worked like a galley slave, rehearsing, playing, with long jumps and bad transportation between towns, and often traveling all night in a *diligence*.

All through this mad time, she was under Veron's protection, but she had little time for him, and perhaps considered him no longer necessary to her financial or social career. In this she

was mistaken. She was passing the zenith of her power. The crash was at hand.

Veron could no longer keep up with her, it is true; but he set the secret police on her trail. They brought the aged Lothario a most mortifying report. While writing him tenderly affectionate letters, Rachel had been regularly making and keeping assignations with other admirers.

This was too much for Veron. He resolved to avenge himself. He invited a party of his most influential friends to luncheon, and regaled them with Rachel's love letters to himself, and then with the police *dossier*. Rachel was socially ruined. The Faubourg St. Germaine cast her out.

About this time, Prince de Joinville—French admiral, and third son of King Philippe—came back from St. Helena with the ashes of Napoleon. He wasted not a day before falling in love with Rachel. A note sent to her dressing room received a gracious answer. Their love affair was ardent while it lasted—which was not very long.

Next on the list came Count Walewski, who had helped foist her upon the Faubourg. He was a widower and very rich. Unlike De Joinville, he made no secret of the affair, but publicly paraded Rachel as his sweetheart. He maintained a gorgeous establishment for her in the Hotel Trudou. Here a child was born, whom Napoleon III. afterward ennobled as the Count d'Etiolles.

As Walewski's beloved, and as mother of Napoleon Bonaparte's doubly left-handed grandson, Rachel was raised to the apogee of her splendor; and she conducted herself for a time with severe rectitude and dignity. Walewski would have married her, had she not foolishly said behind his back, "*Le comte m'embête avec son comme-il-faut.*" That jarred the amorous, but

stately widower to sanity, when it was kindly repeated to him.

Of course, there were plenty of other men at her feet at this time—among them Dumas, the elder, whom she snubbed unmercifully—but in the main she seems to have been true to Walewski. In speaking of her relations with the count, Gribble says:

"Her proceedings strike one as simple and sincere. She liked Walewski, and he did things in style. Splendor, she seems to have felt, was due to her position, her wit, and the national theater of which she was the ornament. Only, as was natural, she preferred that the splendor should be provided by an admirer who had also the qualities of a lover; and Count Walewski fulfilled that condition."

Rachel, in her new greatness, grew haughty and arrogant, but she was, still and always, loyal to her family and foolishly generous to them; especially to her sister Sarah, whose debts she paid again and again. She supported them all, and they gobbled every penny they could beg or bully out of her. She made her rotten brother Raphael her secretary and adviser, at an outrageous salary.

To the Félix clan she was devoted all her life. To others, she was an "Indian giver." Whenever she gave a present, it was her custom sooner or later to take it back. Once, when Beauvallet, the actor, received a gift from her, he announced his intention of chaining it to the wall of his apartment. And when she presented Dumas, the younger, with a ring, he at once returned it, saying as he put it on her finger:

"This is the better way, madame. You will now be saved the trouble of sending for it."

At another time, she carried off a costly parasol that she had given to Samson's daughter. Duchalet gave her a silver center piece which she coveted,

and, to be sure of her gift, Rachel said:

"I will take it home with me in your carriage."

"By all means, mademoiselle," answered Duchalet, "but I trust that it is not too much to ask that you will return the carriage."

She was asked to appear at a charity concert. She refused, of course, but allowed her name to be advertised, on the understanding that apologies be made at the last moment for her absence. Also, she demanded ten tickets for herself. She received the tickets, and promptly sold them to Walewski for ten thousand francs—then got them back again and resold them.

In spite of her sneer at his "*comme-il-faut*" qualities, Rachel fully expected to marry Walewski; but, while she was touring in Holland, word reached her of his marriage to Signora de Ricci, of Florence. This was just three weeks after he had been told of her comment on his manners. She was full of despair, and wrote to a dear friend:

All the fault is on my side. It was my own conduct which brought about the calamity that overtakes me to-day. God has punished me.

In spite of her grief, she kept tight hold of everything Walewski had given her—palace, jewels, and all.

Her sorrow was short-lived, for she presently stole Arthur Bertrand away from Déjazet, a distinguished comedy actress. Bertrand—son of Napoleon's faithful follower of the same name—doesn't seem to have been very well worth stealing. He was a worthless idler, a gambler, and an industrious drinker.

Bertrand loved and rode away, after a stormy scene of recriminations, tears, and entreaties on Rachel's part. Incidentally, he left behind him a son. Rachel was deeply in love with Bertrand, but Bertrand wanted her money, and that she always held tight—except

when the Félixes wanted some of it. She told him once, when he asked her for money to pay a gambling debt:

"My brother has cleaned me out. My purse is empty."

A new affinity soon appeared; in the person of Prince Napoleon, otherwise "Plon-Plon," son of King Jerome, of Westphalia. (You remember Jerome Bonaparte? He was Elizabeth Patterson's husband-*emeritus*.) This affair never went very deeply with either of them; though, when Rachel was dying at Cannes, Plon-Plon came to bid her farewell.

In 1849, Rachel met a country gentleman known in her letters as "Hector B." He not only became her lover, but they were actually betrothed. She was tired of her feverish life and longed for domesticity—or thought she did. In a letter to Hector, she said:

My God! My God! I laugh, I cry! I feel as if I were going mad. I never knew what love was before. Since I parted from you, I have felt myself alone in the world. I love you! Believe in me, believe in your Rachel—your wife, as I must not fail to be. Who will ever love you as I do?

But, as usual, there was a quarrel, and they separated, he to nurse a heart-break, while she consoled herself with a brief and stormy affair with an author who caught her errant fancy and who repaid that fancy by adoration.

By the way, her romance with Hector is said to have inspired the younger Dumas' "*La Dame aux Camellias*," better known as "*Camille*."

At about this time, Charlotte Brontë saw Rachel act. "*Jane Eyre's*" author describes the experience thus:

"Above the horizon, I saw her come. She could yet shine with pale grandeur and steady might; but that star verged already on its judgment day. Seen near, it was a chaos—hollow, half consumed; an orb perishing—half lava, half glow. I had heard this woman

termed 'plain,' and I expected bony harshness and grimness—something large, angular, sallow. What I saw was the shadow of a royal Rachel; a queen, fair as the day once; turned pale now like twilight, and wasted like wax in flame.

"For a while, I thought it was only a woman. By and by, I recognized my mistake. Behold! I found upon her something neither of woman nor of man. In each of her eyes sat a devil. These evil forces bore her through the tragedy, kept up her feeble strength—for she was but a frail creature; and as the action rose and the stir deepened, how wildly they shook her with their passions of the pit. They wrote hell on her haughty brow. They turned her voice to the note of torment. They writhed her regal face to a demoniac mask.

"Hate, murder, and madness incarnate, she stood. It was a marvelous sight—a mighty revelation. She stood, not dressed, but draped in pale antique folds, long and regular, like sculpture. A background of deepest crimson threw her out, white like alabaster, like silver—rather, be it said, like death.

"Scarcely a substance herself, she grapples to conflict with abstractions. Before calamity she is a tigress. Wicked perhaps she is, but also she is strong; and her strength has conquered beauty, has overcome grace, and bound both at her side. Her hair, flying loose in revel or in war, was still an angel's hair, and glorious under a halo. I had seen acting before, but never anything like this!"

In 1855, Rachel appeared as *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. In this depiction of a sister super-woman, she was sublime. Her manager was wild with delight and at the play's end rushed to congratulate her.

"It was not for *Adrienne* dying I wept," she told him, "but for myself.

I suddenly had a strange premonition that I should die young. You are in ecstasies when I act. Well, I assure you there is a Rachel in me ten times greater than the Rachel you know. I have not been one-quarter as great as I might have been. Ah, if only I had been brought up differently! If I had had different friends around me! If I had lived a better life, what an artist I should have been!"

Her work as *Adrienne* was the last flash of perfect power. Swiftly she began her descent.

As Rachel's star waned, Ristori's began to rise. Rachel, beaten in her own rôles by her younger rival, played to half-empty houses. At last she decided to leave Paris. Dumas, père, her old enemy, wrote:

"What does it matter whether Rachel goes or stays? She has the house all to herself—the House of the Dead. Let her remain in it."

She was dying. Her family scourged her from the rest that she craved, and forced her to go on making money for them. She sailed for America, and made her first appearance here at the Metropolitan Theater, in New York, on September 3, 1855. Her audiences overflowed the house. She swayed them at will. To her it was like old times.

At the initial performance, an odd thing happened. In the middle of Rachel's entrance speech, a sound as of rushing winds swept the house. She stopped dead short—dumfounded. Then she understood. Few New Yorkers in those days were good French scholars. Nearly every one in the audience had a libretto. The queer sound was caused by two thousand people turning over the same page at once.

For a time, here, she played to big crowds. Then business slumped. The New York public had seen the wondrous French star, and, having once seen and heard her, it was no longer

interested. She was poorly supported, and the plays were badly and cheaply staged.

Rachel next tried Boston, with fair success; but her return engagement in New York was disastrous. As a whole, the tour was a thorough failure. Rachel begged Raphael Félix, her manager, to let her give up and go home.

"I'm dying!" she wept.

"You *can't*—you *shan't* give up!" growled her loving brother.

And Rachel—who had ordered princes around as if they had been lackeys—meekly obeyed the beastly little parasite.

But presently she went to pieces, in Havana. Even Raphael's fierce commands could not drive her from her sick bed. The tour was canceled; the company was paid and sent back to Europe. Her two sisters, Dinah and Leah, whom she was supporting, deserted her. After resting a while, Rachel managed to get back to France. There she wrote:

I am thirty-two, and I look fifty. Eighteen years of passionate tirades on the stage and mad expeditions to the ends of the earth have aged me, poor, weak little woman that I am! I chose to live like a gourmande. In the course of a few years I have devoured my days and my nights. But the thing is done, and I am not going to moan, like the penitents: "It was my fault, my grievous fault!" Ah, it is over. If I had not two sons who are all I love in the world, I should not be sorry to die. But I shall come back. The God of Israel will permit me, in the *entr'actes* above, to come to earth again and kiss my children and revisit my friends and the theater which I have loved so well.

In the pale haze of a November dawn, the broken woman was helped from her bed into a carriage. She drove, all alone, first to the Gymnase, afterward to the Française. She stopped a few silent minutes in front of each, and then, crying bitterly, drove on to the railway station where began her journey to Cannes—her last journey on earth.

Even at death's door, she could still charm. And with her to Cannes went her latest and last adorer, one Lieutenant Aubard, a naval officer—who, by the way, made her final hours miserable by trying to lure her from her own religious faith to his.

Prince Napoleon—Plon-Plon—presently arrived to say good-by. But of all her bloodsucker family her sister Sarah alone was with her at the last. Sarah summoned a rabbi from Nice to chant the last prayers for the dying.

In response to the first ritual question, Rachel panted:

"*S'hmai, Ysroel, Adonai Elahainou Adonai Ekhód!*" ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God!") and sank back dead.

And so, on the night of Sunday, January 3, 1856, perished one of the strangest, one of the worst, one of the best, of our super-women; the greatest tragedienne of her time; honored by

monarchs, adored by men of all ranks; sometime conqueror of the world of fashion; heroine of a myriad caprices, inamorata of a myriad lovers; a woman of fire; a spirit that rent and destroyed its frail body.

"Such creatures deserve to be punished!"

Why, yes, of course. Of course. Why not?

But shan't we leave all that to the theologians, and content ourselves with saying, as did her olden rival, Déjazet, who came to cover the lonely grave in Père Lachaise Cemetery with flowers:

"*Pauvre Rachel! Ah, la pauvre, pauvre Rachel!*"

The May number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's Super-Women series: "Anna Brudenel, the Devil Countess of Shrewsbury."



SONG

FAITHFUL in spite of all you do, in spite
Of all you give to others, faithful still;
True as a steadfast star that holds the bright,
Dark mantle of the evening. What you will
Is good to me because I love you so,
Faithful to you wherever you may go.

Faithful in spite of your forgetfulness
Of happy gardens—kisses once so new.
Never shall wait another tenderness,
Never another love cloud mife for you.
Scarred by the wound of you, bright with your fire,
Faithful forever to a sole desire.

MARIE VAN VORST.



THEY stretch away to right and left as you travel along Broadway—the brownstone haunts of the roomers. The houses are so much alike that the proverbial peas would exhibit a comparatively marked individuality, and even old residents must sometimes refer to the numbers to discover where they live. They are huddled so closely on their little strips of expensive Manhattan standing room that it would be impossible to insert another house anywhere without pushing the end of the street into the river.

Prosperity, grandeur even, inhabited many of them in the days when upper Manhattan was a rock heap and the peak of the city debt still visible to the naked eye. Even bear raiders and land boomers did not disdain to reside, in those days, in the brownstone streets, with their serried rows of massive stoops. But it is many years now since they departed and left their abodes to the roomers. The folding bedstead now occupies the place of the "period" suite, and in the corners where marquetry tables stood, a travel-battered trunk is apt to serve the same purpose. The couch—when there is one—is of torn and humpy saddlebag cloth instead of the former tapestry. The pictures—if there are any—are frankly execrable.

There remains only, of the former glory, the heavy brass chandelier with

its four gas jets, of which two at least are likely to be sealed up. And that remains immovable, an anachronism almost incredible within hail of the skyscrapers and the electrical effulgence of the White Way.

Not that the roomers, as a class, find fault with their archaic illumination. Many of them are secretly glad of it, for the most enthusiastic advocates of electric light never claimed that it would boil clandestine saucepans.

There, in the brownstone streets, the roomers live and suffer and hope. Theirs the long days of embittered toil; theirs the longer evenings of frigid loneliness, as close together as grubs in a hive and about as communicative, but scarcely so placid. For they have only four walls instead of six, like the bees, and in place of grublike insensibility they have human eyes to ache for the sight of a friend and human hearts to starve for affection.

Theirs the solitary evening promenades amid the magnificence and luxury of the spendthrift city, which is always just round the corner. Theirs the glimpse of gayety they may not share and the sight of opulence they may not touch. But theirs also the sweets of hope, the joy of hard-won victory, the reward of lonely toil.

The young ones, that is to say. There are old roomers, too, but for the

most part they have mercifully forgotten desire.

It is almost literally true that Rudge Whitman lived in one room. He slept in it, and he worked in it, and he was mostly working when he wasn't asleep. He went out to the restaurants on Broadway for meals, because he had to admit the unpleasant necessity of eating, but he grudged the time it occupied.

Rudge was a large man with loose-jointed action who required plenty of room to move about, so he had a bed that stood on end during the day and dissembled itself. "I'm a bookcase! Really, I'm nothing but a bookcase!" it seemed to be saying, pathetically unconscious of the corner of a quilt hanging out behind with the telltale, disreputable effect of the stolen sausages in the pocket of the protesting clown.

The rest of the room looked like a scratch exhibition of engineering blue prints. They covered the couch and both the chairs, and littered the floor. The walls were hung with them until very little of the wall paper was visible. But this, as the design was of an atrocious arsenical green, was really an improvement.

On a table by the window stood a working model of a machine, shining with nickel plating and angular with protruding levers. Coralie Hythe, who lived on the same floor, had christened the model "Frankenstein" for reasons of her own; and by this name Rudge was accustomed on occasion to address it, during his brain-cudgeling promenades among the blue prints—affectionately or otherwise according to the state of his optimistic index.

On this particular evening, the index was low, and he stood with his long legs wide apart and his long arms folded and his long hair ruffled, and addressed Frankenstein, the model,

with a certain degree of comminatory eloquence.

The sound of a footstep in the corridor caused him to bite off the end of the apostrophe and reach his door in a couple of strides. He threw it open in time to detect a whisk of retreating skirts.

"Coralie!" he called anxiously. "Don't run away!"

"I heard you talking to somebody," said a silvery, unembarrassed voice from the gloom of the corridor.

"I was only telling old Frankenstein what I thought of him."

"Wretched old thing!" replied the voice, as its owner approached again.

She appeared in the door, a radiant figure in a graceful cloak, and it seemed to Rudge Whitman that the doors of enchanted palaces had never framed a picture of more utterly charming femininity. He tipped a sheaf of blue prints off the easiest chair, and turned it around in eager invitation.

"Has the fairy princess come to take her subject to a vaudeville show?" he asked, remembering that it was Saturday evening.

"No," said the fairy princess definitely.

"Then why did she tap at his door and run away?"

"Because she wanted to rag him for not having been out to dinner, and for letting his hair grow too long, and for general deterioration. You're working too hard, Rudge."

"You haven't been out to dinner yourself, if it comes to that," protested Whitman, with an eye on her bandbox neatness.

"Oh, I'm invited to supper, Ruddy—supper in a sure-to-Heaven restaurant with real swells. I've had to spend all the time fixing up my meeting clothes, so I wouldn't look like a poor relation."

"Then I can't go to the Roof," said Whitman. "It's queer how the vaude-

ville stunts that make you twist with laughing, when you've some one beside you to share the joke, only succeed in making you tearful when you sit and watch them by yourself."

He studied her for a moment with keen appreciation.

"I finished dressing half an hour too soon," she explained, "and I simply couldn't sit there and listen to the shrieks of my wall paper. It's pink, Ruddy, with cheap, splotchy silver stripes. These blue prints are ever so restful."

"I suppose it's your friend, Mrs. Calmont, again?" demanded Whitman irrelevantly.

"Yes; isn't she good? She calls it 'bringing me out.' She was a steno herself only two years ago, but a real peach. It's some jump from fifteen per to a limousine and Central Park West. It would have made some girls so myopic they couldn't have seen me any more with a telescope. But Marie Calmont's just the same as when she lived in the next street and we used to buy canned soup to take home and warm over the gas."

"That's the advantage of beauty," reflected Rudge, gloomily eyeing the model. "It finds its level right away—no waiting. When you have to rely on wits, it's a long, weary process."

"You're throwing your life away on that thing," said the girl contemptuously. "Think where you might have been by this time but for Frankenstein! You're clever, Ruddy! And, instead, you're developing a chronic frown by wasting your best years on a few pounds of metal junk. Is it worth it?"

Rudge glared fiercely at the machine.

"Blamed if I know!" he said. "I don't think about that any more. There's a danger in looking back, you know. You remember what happened to Mrs. Lot."

"But you ought to think," Coralie insisted.

"I just daren't. I've put four years of hard work into the thing, and I've spent nearly every cent I had on patents. Now I find it will take two more years to bring me in sight of the finish. I should be changed into something softer than a pillar of salt if I looked back. Putty, probably."

He picked up a curiously shaped hammer that he used in adjusting the model, and flourished it.

"There have been times," he said, "when it wouldn't have taken damned much to make me batter old Frankenstein to bits and walk out, free to live my life like other men. But I've put too much into the thing now. Besides, that machine is going to save thousands of men some day from lives of brutalizing labor. It seems like it's what I was put on the earth for. It's my job, and I've got to go through with it."

"And how long do you expect it will take you?" demanded Coralie practically.

"Lord knows! It does its work, all right; but, in its present form, human labor happens to be just the least shade cheaper, and no manufacturer is going to pay good money for Frankenstein when he can buy human hands and human eyes for less. What does it matter that the eyes grow dim and the hands warped and callous? I've got to show him! I must get construction and operating cost down twenty-five per cent."

"And meanwhile you're shy at least one shirt button!" exclaimed Coralie suddenly. "It's about time for another general inspection. Turn them out, Ruddy!"

He stammered protests, running a large, capable hand through his crisp, tawny hair.

"If you won't," said the girl, "I'll have to do it for you."

She stepped across the blue prints to the bureau, with a determined click of her heels, and dragged open the

drawers, one after another. A pile of rejected garments grew on the chair beside her.

"Why, you've hardly a button left to your name!" she cried indignantly. "I'll take these away and fix them to-morrow. Sunday afternoon is always a dull time. And these ties are all in disgusting creases."

"I put them under the bed sometimes," Rudge asserted. "But they're just as bad again in a day or two."

"Mutt! As if that would do them any good! They have to be cleaned with gasoline, and damped, and pressed with an iron. I'll put them with the shirts."

He watched her busy overhauling of his wardrobe with mingled discomfort and admiration. Like most big men, he was easily bullied by women, who appeared to take pleasure in the process. Coralie Hythe, moreover, was pretty with the sort of prettiness that entitles its owner to do as she pleases.

She was not pretty like the story-book heroines. Hers was none of your delicate oval faces. It was square, like a handsome boy's, with a chin of notable decision, and there was a lively gleam of daring in her disturbing blue eyes. A very swift, immaculate, and self-possessed creature indeed she appeared to Rudge Whitman, as she piled the offending garments on the chair.

"Say, Coralie," he broke out at last, "you mustn't worry over those things any more. Once, for a joke, it was all right. But I really ought to have fixed them myself. I don't suppose I work any harder than you do. Lord only knows how you girls manage to keep yourselves so well pressed and manicured and dolled up all the time! You must put in hours at it while men are sleeping."

"No, while they smoke. Men waste whole ages of precious time smoking. And as for the buttons, they're as much my job as Frankenstein is yours."

"You've nothing to do with jobs," said Rudge. "You're a reward."

Coralie leaned on the open drawer and faced him inquiringly.

"There's a fellow somewhere," he went on, "who's working hard to make good. Maybe he never saw you, maybe he thinks he's working just for money or fame. But it's you he's working for, nevertheless; and he can make all the money and win all the fame he wants, but he'll find at the end of it that if he hasn't got you and made you happy, he'll have done nothing."

"He'd better hustle, then," said Coralie, laughing. "I can't stand this existence much longer. Sometimes I feel like going out and getting married just for the sake of being able to choose my own wall paper."

She gathered up the garments and moved to the door. As he held it open for her, Rudge Whitman's rugged face flushed darkly, and a blue vein stood out like a cord in the center of his forehead. She turned and faced him in the half light of the corridor—bright-eyed, challenging, infinitely desirable. She saw the muscles of his jaw quiver under the restraint of his will. With consummate coquetry, she seemed for a moment to throw wide open the doors of her soul, letting all the warmth and joy and beauty of her woman's nature shine out upon him.

"Do you know what you're asking me to do?" he demanded hoarsely. "You're asking me to take the hammer and knock Frankenstein into little pieces."

Coralie nodded, her eyes fixed on his.

"Into more bits than a jigsaw puzzle," she whispered. "I'll help you."

"And I'd despise myself ever afterward; and, what's more, you'd despise me, in your heart. No man ever gained anything by shirking his job."

The light went out of the girl's eyes, and she stamped her foot.

"Since you prefer Frankenstein!" she said, and turned away.

Rudge Whitman's mouth twitched a little at the corners as he closed the door behind her. For a long time, he sat with his head in his hands, glowering at the model.

"Hell, Frankenstein!" he exclaimed at last. "If I'd known what you were going to cost me, I'd have reniged the first week!"

"I'm fond of ices," remarked Coralie, later in the evening. "But there's something wicked about ice cream as good as this."

The man who sat next to her, a genial, round-faced stockbroker, laughed so much that fluffy, doll-like Mrs. Calmont, the hostess, regarded him with amusement.

"You two seem to hit it off pretty well," she remarked. "I hope you're properly grateful to me, Mr. Decker."

"You may be sure," replied the genial little man, with a glance of open admiration at Coralie.

It was certainly a perfect supper party from Coralie's point of view. It was her first experience of the more expensive restaurants; and the roof garden, filled with well-dressed people, appeared to her enraptured blue eyes a sort of fairy palace. The deftness and good looks of the waiters impressed her as much as the almost shameless refinement of the cuisine. The glasses were so thin that she could have crushed them in her fingers; and the napery was more like silk than linen, it was so soft and glossy. Her feet seemed to sink into the carpet, and everywhere there were flowers and softly shaded lights.

As for the shock-haired leader of the orchestra, Coralie would gladly have hugged him each time he played. When she expressed a wish that he would play her favorite air from "Lucia," a miracle was produced. Decker scribbled something on his card and

gave it to a waiter, and a minute later it dawned upon Coralie, with all the wonder of magic, that the air was being played. When it was over, she looked upon Decker with increased respect.

In addition, she tasted champagne for the first time, and liked it very much, though she was afraid to drink much of it. Also, she talked a great deal, and felt rather a success, since Robert Decker made no secret of the fact that he was enjoying himself hugely.

When at length they went for a walk among the palm tubs and terraces on the roof, Mrs. Calmont took her affectionately by the arm.

"My dear, you're positively brilliant to-night," she said. "I'm ever so glad you decided to come. Bobbie Decker tried to get out of it until I told him you would be here."

"You're real good to me, Marie," sighed Coralie gratefully.

"I know what it is to have no home and be lonely, child," replied little Mrs. Calmont, from the venerable pinnacle of her two years of married life. "I was recalling only to-night how I used to walk past this place and look in and sigh and go and buy things at a delicatessen and eat supper in my bedroom all alone. And sometimes I used to cry till the sandwiches were damp, just for want of some one to talk to."

"I tried a boarding house once," Coralie admitted, "but the food was fierce. And yet I don't know—it seems as if anything's better than living all alone. It spoils people's natures. There's a woman at my house with her hair dyed a bright scarlet, and she hates me. I can see it, although I never spoke to her. She snorts in her sleep very loudly, and quite often, and the sound sends her neighbor almost crazy. He's a fearfully thin, nervous man, and his hair is dyed black, except the roots. This last week, he went out in a rage and bought a tin horn, and since then,

whenever he hears her snore, he rushes across the room for his tin horn and replies. I asked him why he did it, and he became very bitter and said: 'The old witch takes snuff.' I hope living alone won't make me grow like that."

Mrs. Calmont laughed and pressed her arm again reassuringly.

"Never fear, child! Beauties like you aren't left to wither on the branch. You belong to a different life by right, and you can't be kept out of it long. Looks like yours are a passport anywhere, if you only trot them around and let them be seen."

She stopped suddenly, with a little gasp of surprise. A man who had been leaning over the parapet and gazing down upon Broadway straightened himself and approached them. He was a tall man with a handsome, theatrical sort of face. It was deeply lined in the cheeks and almost blue-black where he shaved, and the black hair rippled up from his forehead like petrified wavelets. He had a massive neck set on a pair of superb shoulders, and his voice, when he recognized Marie Calmont, was as musical as a deep-toned bell. Little Mrs. Calmont greeted him with a kind of fluttering surprise.

Coralie, left alone, found herself immediately appropriated by Robert Decker, who seized the opportunity with an avidity that scorned concealment. Mrs. Calmont, when Coralie cast a glance over her shoulder, appeared oblivious of all but the stranger. She was fidgeting nervously with her fan, and Coralie thought she looked scared. Hugh Calmont was away below in search of his auto, and the rest were scattered about the roof. Decker took Coralie's arm and led her into a shadowed corner of the parapet, whence they could watch the blaze and twinkle of the electric signs.

"That's Randall Soutter, the playwright," he said, with a jerk of his head

in the direction of Mrs. Calmont. "I suppose you've seen his play, 'The Mocking Bird.' It's drawing all New York."

He waited in obvious suspense for her reply, and appeared relieved when she confessed that she visited theaters very rarely.

"Suppose we make a little party of two to see it next week?" he suggested, with transparently assumed indifference. "It's too bad to leave all our meetings to chance and Mrs. Calmont. I'll write you, if I may, when I see how the booking runs. I'll have to beg seats. It's next to impossible to buy them at present. Hello, here's Calmont, looking for us!"

They walked out into the illuminated pathway to meet him. Behind their host walked Mrs. Calmont, an expression of blank misery on her baby face. The tall stranger with the wavy hair and the superb expanse of shirt front had vanished.

"The auto's waiting, if you people are ready," said Hugh Calmont buoyantly.

His wife rushed to Coralie's side.

"Won't you come home and see my new boudoir and talk a while?" she asked. "Hugh will bring the car back for you after he's dropped Mr. Decker."

In the elevator, as they descended, was a gorgeous woman in equally gorgeous raiment, from whom the other women almost palpably recoiled. The gorgeous woman looked admiringly at Coralie's face, and contemptuously at Coralie's five-dollar shoes, and smiled mysteriously to herself. Somehow this smile troubled the girl not a little. It imported the first note of discord into an evening of glorious harmony.

The behavior of Mrs. Calmont on the way uptown served to dull still more the keen edge of Coralie's happiness. The girl could see that her hostess' unusual silence was due to some sudden

chagrin. On most occasions, Mrs. Calmont was wont to twitter continuously like a sparrow. Now, however, her lips were tightly set, and she stared out of the car without seeing anything, and Coralie thought she was a little pale.

Hugh Calmont was occupied with the steering wheel and the pedestrians who skipped at the sound of his horn with the lamblike obedience that is the price of existence on upper Broadway. Robert Decker proceeded to monopolize Coralie's attention. When Mrs. Calmont's head was turned away, he held Coralie's hand. She had at first an impulse to withdraw it, but on reflection could not discover any sufficient reason for doing so. Instead, she studied Decker attentively. The lights that flashed momentarily on their faces, as the car tore uptown, gave Decker's features a new aspect. Under the round geniality, there appeared lines of self-indulgence and a species of feeble greed. She observed, too, that his outstretched feet revealed ankles a trifle too podgy for a young man.

Decker himself, looking into her perfect eyes, in which every hair of the heavy lashes might have been separately inserted with a microscope, thought they were the most romantic eyes he had ever seen. He told himself he was fortunate to have awakened that dreamy, spiritual expression in such a wonderful face.

He did not suspect that behind it the mind remained cold and set as a steel chisel. Like all modern girls who are not partial imbeciles, Coralie Hythe was vividly aware of the power and possibilities conferred by good looks. But she felt that it was unnecessary to let Decker see that she was calculating his ankles against a certain pink wall paper with splotchy silver stripes, and wondering which was more tolerable.

When the car drew up at the Calmont apartment house, her hostess slipped an

arm through Coralie's and hurried her in silence to the elevator. From the auto, Decker waved a beatific farewell.

"You look tired, dear," said Coralie anxiously. "Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, it's nothing," said Mrs. Calmont, with a little nervous smile and a backward toss of the head. "I had a kind of jar, meeting Randall Soutter like that."

Coralie followed her into her boudoir with some inquietude; but, once there, she forgot her concern in eager interest. She had helped to choose the furnishings of the dainty room, and was curious to see the result. When Mrs. Calmont snapped on the soft glow of electricity, the girl could not repress a little cry of delight.

"You lucky Marie!" she cried. "It's just perfect!"

And in reply, little Mrs. Calmont sank on the end of the primrose satin couch and buried her head in her rounded arms and sobbed with the abandon of a child.

When the first wave of dismay had passed over her, Coralie lost no time in bringing into play all the feminine arts of comfort. She circled her friend's shaken little form with her strong young arms and raised her and petted her and murmured soothing nonsense. Presently Marie Calmont's sobs subsided into an occasional breathless gasp.

"It was so sudden!" she said. "I didn't mean to make an—an exhibition of myself."

"You mean that tall man, the playwright?"

Mrs. Calmont nodded behind her filmy handkerchief.

"He was cruel! You didn't hear what he said?"

Coralie shook her head, her grave blue eyes fixed wonderingly on her friend's baby features.

"Of course I—I had to congratulate him on the success of 'The Mocking Bird,' and he said—you can't imagine

how he looked at me!—he said he would never forgive his luck for having come two years too late.”

Coralie stared.

“I’ve—I’ve been married two years,” stammered little Mrs. Calmont. “That was what he meant. I was sick of my life, and I thought he was chasing moonbeams, and I wanted a place in the world and my own things round me, and I wouldn’t wait. I thought, then, that I could put him out of my mind in a month and need never see him again. Well, he—I keep running against him. I’ve seen him three times in the two years. Once I was coming out of Rector’s with Hugh, and he passed us on the sidewalk. His shoes were worn off short, and he looked—like he didn’t have enough to eat.”

“Well, he’s all right now,” murmured Coralie soothingly. “Perhaps he doesn’t feel really bad about it any more.”

Marie Calmont’s doll eyes opened wide.

“He thinks I’m an angel from heaven,” she asserted. “That serious sort of man never knows any better.”

“He’ll soon find some one else now.”

“It isn’t he!” burst out Mrs. Calmont. “It’s me—me!”

She crushed her damp handkerchief in her tiny fist and struck desperately at the cushioned end of the lounge.

“I love him, I love him!” she cried. “I care more for every hair on his head than I do for all the other men breathing! I always did, and I always will! And, because I hadn’t faith enough to wait, I’ve got to go on paying, paying till I die!”

The outer door of the apartment opened and shut with a clang, and in the hall sounded the heavy footfall of Hugh Calmont, returning. As Coralie got up to go, her mind reverted unaccountably to the gorgeous woman in the elevator, from whom the other

women had recoiled, and who had smiled at her shoes.

A light was still burning in Rudge Whitman’s room when she stepped out of the auto and said a hurried good night to Hugh Calmont. The single glimpse she had caught, as they had turned into the street, of Rudge’s rugged face bent over the model in the window sent her flying up the stairs with a heart that beat wildly. Reaching the corridor, she threw open his door without the formality of knocking.

“Ruddy, what have you done?” she gasped.

Rudge stared blankly. His eyes were lined with weariness, and his hair was ruffled into stark confusion. In his hand was the curious hammer with the short haft and the ponderous head.

“Give it to me at once!” she commanded, with a stamp of her foot.

Bewildered, he surrendered the instrument. Coralie cast it under the bed with a clatter. As he moved toward her, she saw that behind him stood Frankenstein, the machine, apparently intact. She sank breathlessly in a chair, regardless of the blue prints.

“Whatever scared you, kid?” asked Rudge, slowly recovering his balance.

“I thought— You remember what you said— I was afraid you had smashed Frankenstein.”

“Not on your life! I’ve been wishing, though, that I dared. Say, you look better than cream candy to-night. Did you have a good time?”

“Yes, but I couldn’t help thinking about you, working here all alone. Ruddy, let’s get out into the country some place to-morrow, won’t you? You’ve been doing too much lately.”

She stood up, looking into his tired, half-incredulous eyes, and suddenly her own filled with tears.

“Show me what you have been doing,” she said softly, and linked an arm

in his to draw him across the room to the gleaming model. Through her dimmed eyes, Frankenstein seemed to gesture encouragingly with his shining levers.

Rudge laid a finger that shook on a trembling coil spring.

"It's this adjustment," he said. "Somehow I couldn't induce it to stay fixed."

Realizing that she was looking, not at the model, but at him, he stopped, and his eyes filled with wonder and longing. He saw a large tear escape from her heavy lashes and roll, unregarded, down her cheek. The muscles in his heavy mechanic's jaw tightened convulsively, and Coralie felt his arm quiver under the pressure of her own. Suddenly she set her pearly little teeth at him.

"Ruddy! You great, staring boob!" she whispered. "Have I got to beg you to kiss me?"

It was much later, unconscionably later, when they returned from a glorious walk through the deserted brown-

stone streets, silent but for their footfalls and the occasional squalling of the cats in the areas. At the stoop of their house, Rudge gathered her up suddenly in his powerful arms.

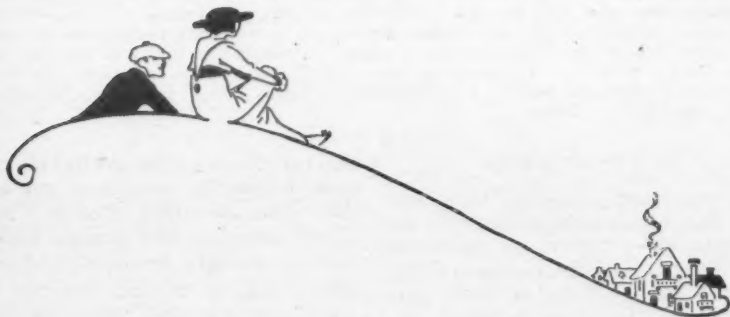
"There's no looking back now!" he said.

Coralie let her head fall on his shoulder with a little shuddering sigh of unspeakable content.

"I'll wait, Ruddy," she promised. "I don't care if old Frankenstein wants four years, or fourteen. I'll sit and wait, as good as gold and as quiet as a mouse, if you'll only remember to keep on telling me you love me."

It was even disgracefully late, but high up in the tall houses a light showed here and there where other roomers worked and waited. From Rudge Whitman's stout heart a wish went out to them all—a wish for the hand that tires not and the hope that never flags. A silent wish, but it may be that some of them heard it and were cheered.

The young roomers, that is to say. The old ones were deep in the oblivion of the death of desire.





THE DAUGHTER PAYS MRS. BAILLIE REYNOLDS

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

To save her family from destitution, Virginia Mynors, a girl of twenty, consents to marry Osbert Gaunt, of whom she knows nothing except that he was once engaged to her mother. She and Gaunt have never met, and have seen each other but once—in a London art gallery, which she visited with some friends of her more prosperous days, Gerald Rosenberg and his sister. Gerald loves her, and would marry her but for his father's disapproval. When Virginia learns that the gloomy man who followed her about so strangely was Osbert Gaunt, and that he wishes to marry her, she concludes that it is because of her resemblance to her mother. It is indeed because of that, but for another reason than Virginia supposes. Gaunt's life has been embittered as a result of his jilting by Mrs. Mynors, a heartless flirt, for a richer man. He believes Virginia to be the same type of woman, and takes a savage joy in the thought of bullying her. Mrs. Mynors knows this, but though she is wild with chagrin at finding her old lover no longer under her spell, and would gladly thwart him, fear of poverty restrains her, and she lets Virginia make the sacrifice. Gaunt agrees to support the family, educate Tony, the boy, and pay for a new treatment for the little girl, Pansy, who is lame. After a hasty marriage, Gaunt harshly breaks the truth to his wife. Though bewildered by her gentle, dignified acceptance of the situation, he concludes that she is only acting, and continues to treat her as if she were the mercenary girl he believes her to be. Thinking to confirm that belief, he opens several of her letters, and is overwhelmed by their revelation of her true nature. In his remorse, he flies to the other extreme and falls deeply in love with his wife. She, however, is so nervous as a result of his treatment of her that the doctor forbids him to see her, and before he has a chance to show his change of heart, she is called to London by the illness of her sister. She promises Gaunt to return, though she still believes that he wants her simply to persecute her. Gaunt lives upon that promise. In London she meets Rosenberg. He suspects that her marriage is unhappy, and Mrs. Mynors encourages his suspicion, leading him to believe that Virginia loves him. They arrange a scheme to compromise her, with the hope that it will result in a divorce. The plan goes awry. Virginia and Gerald are caught in a storm, and forced to spend the night at a wretched inn. Virginia falls ill on the day before that set for her return to Gaunt.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IT may seem a curious thing that Mrs. Mynors, dependent upon the bounty of Osbert Gaunt, should have been so ready to consent to a plan that, if successful, might once more cast her penniless upon the world. She herself was at a loss to understand the true meaning of the malice that actu-

ated her. In all her life she had hitherto never known the strength of any passion. She was incapable of deep love, of real suffering. Her maternal instinct was not strongly developed, and selfishness had, up to now, preserved her from anything more disturbing than temper or discomfort.

The first emotion of compelling force

that had ever gripped her had been the desire for revenge that had taken its rise upon the day when she had gone to meet her old lover at the club, carefully adorned for conquest, and had received from him so unexpected a slap in the face. So unused was she to being dominated by any overmastering emotion that she was being run away with; and now and then, by fits and starts, she saw with dismay that this was so.

She reassured herself, however. Like most women who have always been attractive to the male, she overrated her own powers. She believed that Gerald Rosenberg was her slave. As a son-in-law, he would be quite ideal and unable to refuse her anything. She could not deny Gaunt's generosity; but he, although spending large sums when he believed it necessary, was severe upon luxury. He hated the wasting of pence, whereas Gerald was always giving presents of the kind she welcomed and understood—cut flowers, seats at the theater, pretty trifles—to her, to Tony, to Pansy, even to Virginia. She was convinced that her influence was paramount with Gerald—and if with him, then with his father also. After all, he was the only son; the old man could not afford to be implacable. Socially, her daughter was more than his equal. Her superficial mind glossed over such ugly facts as divorce. Everybody did such things nowadays, and everybody could be told the true story of this particular case.

Gerald and Virginia were blameless; the mistake had been in the hasty, ill-considered marriage. Gaunt would have to own himself beaten. She sometimes pictured an interview between herself and Gaunt, wherein she would nobly repudiate his gross insinuations and speak beautifully of her daughter's angelic innocence.

Seldom had she been more gratified by anything than by the task that fell to her of writing to "dear Osbert" to

explain that Virginia had caught a chill and would not be able to travel for some days. She used the term "days," much as she longed to write "weeks"; for there was one possibility that she kept ever before her eyes, and that was the fear lest Gaunt should lose patience and come to Worthing himself.

Virgie's feverish attack suited her plan so well that she could not blame Gerald for his carelessness, though she privately thought he had badly mismanaged things.

Virgie, indeed, was feeling downright ill. She had such a splitting headache that, upon hearing that Gaunt had been duly informed of her illness, she abandoned the effort of writing to him herself and merely lay still, feeling in every aching bone the relief of a few days' respite before taking the final step.

Grover received her in a state of queer agitation, and was half inclined to pet and pity, half to blame. The good woman had been very uncertain in her moods ever since they had come to Worthing. Her heart was jealous for the lonely man in Derbyshire. She saw well enough what were Mr. Rosenberg's feelings, and she felt convinced that Mrs. Mynors was also well aware of them. She was indignant that the pretty woman, whom she cordially hated, should allow such freedom of intercourse.

When the couple had failed to return, or even to telegraph, the previous night, Grover had gone through some awful moments. The thought: "They're off!" had flashed through her mind, in spite of her real attachment to her young mistress. She was so relieved when they returned that, like many people in like case, she felt she must scold a little.

"Don't tell me! England's a place where there's railway stations and where there's telegraph offices," she said severely. "If the last train had

gone before you got to the station, I suppose there was a village near, and where there's a village, there's a telegraph. The young man could have knocked up the postmaster, couldn't he?"

"I dare say. I never thought of that. I was so sure we should find the motor when we got back to the inn. Oh, it was such a horrid place, Grover, and so uncomfortable! The woman was so disagreeable, and seemed never to have heard of anybody wanting hot water to wash with."

"Serve you right, I'd say, that I would, if it wasn't for your being so poorly! After all the care the master took of you! After his standing to one side and denying himself even the sight of your face, so as you should get well quicker! If he was to see the way you carry on here among them all! At everybody's beck and call! Fetch and carry, first here, then there! Fine and pleased he'd be, wouldn't he?"

"Oh, Grover, but I have been so well until this happened! And how could I help it? Here are you, cross old thing, scolding me in the same breath, first for taking a chill, and then because I didn't stay pottering out in the rain still longer, hunting for a telegraph office! The horse was dead beat. She couldn't go any farther."

"If I could box Mr. Rosenberg's ears, I'd do it with pleasure," was Grover's vindictive reply, somewhat qualified by the extreme tenderness with which she handled the culprit, undressing, tending, soothing her, and laying her down among her pillows to rest.

"Men don't think of things," murmured Virgie weakly, feeling bound to excuse Gerald.

"There's one that does," was the immediate retort. "One that has never had anything, to do with ladies all the time I've known him till now, but has shown more true consideration than any

one of these young, fancy men, thinking of nothing but their own pleasure."

Virgie colored painfully and was silent. This subject was taboo between mistress and maid. Grover could not but know that Virginia was in mortal fear of her husband, and the good woman regretted the man's awkward shyness, which prevented him, as she thought, from making headway. Her mind was filled with keen anxiety lest all the hopes entertained by the household at Omberleigh should be brought to naught by this unnatural separation of the newly wed.

No more was said, and later in the day the maid bitterly regretted having said even so much, for Mrs. Gaunt's fever mounted, and by night she was delirious.

It seemed to the patient a long time afterward, though in reality it was not more than forty-eight hours, when she awoke from a sound sleep, and, glancing around, found the curtains drawn, excluding the sunshine, and her mother seated by her bed.

Mrs. Mynors looked up with an angelic smile when the sleeper stirred, rose, and bent over her daughter with a look of pity and sympathy.

"Oh, how long have I slept?" asked Virginia, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. "Where's Grover, mamma? I must get up and be off. I am going back to Omberleigh to-day."

"Not to-day, my sweetest," was the murmured reply. "The doctor would not allow that."

"Oh, but Osbert is expecting me—he will be vexed." She put her hand to her head.

"Lie down, darling. You mustn't exert yourself. You're weak. Osbert knows. It's all right."

Virginia, conscious of a swimming in her head, though the pain was gone, subsided upon her pillows.

"Oh, mamma, how tiresome! How

very tiresome!" she faltered. "I've been away so long—I must go back."

"My dearest, my most precious child, don't grieve yourself. It's all right. You are with those who love you and will take care of you," was the cooing answer. "There's no need for fear, my Virgie."

"It isn't fear. It's breaking my word," stammered the girl, knowing that her words sounded like nonsense, but feeling explanation too difficult.

Mrs. Mynors, without speaking, brought her a cup of strong broth that had been keeping warm over a little lamp.

"I've sent that poor, good Grover out for a walk," said she. "She's not as young as she was, and the nursing has tired her. But I had another reason for sending her away when you should wake. I wanted to be alone with you."

She did not say this until the soup had been drunk, and Virginia felt refreshed.

"Why, mamma?"

Her mother sank to her knees beside the bed, holding her hand.

"My darling," said she, half sobbing, "there's no more need for concealment between your mother and you. When you were delirious, I sat beside you—I had to listen to what you said, and I know—I know your pitiful secret."

There was a long, deep silence. At last Virginia spoke:

"Mother, tell me what you mean. What do you know?"

"I know that Osbert has been cruel to you. I know that you go in fear of his cruelty," came the whispered answer.

There was another silence.

"Well, mamma, if that were true? I don't say it is true, but if it were—what then?"

"What then? Why, Virgie, then you must be rescued from him. He must be a madman if he could illtreat you, and the law will keep you from him."

For a moment the eyes of the girl in the bed lit up with a flaming hope. For a moment she turned to her mother with a rush of eager, palpitating confidence. Then a new look crossed her face, which grew composed and firm. Her voice was not sad, but steady, as she replied:

"I have sworn."

"Sworn, Virgie? Darling, what do you mean by that?"

"I have sworn to love him," was the answer. "I am his wife."

"But, Virginia, if he has failed to keep his oath—"

"You think that absolves me from keeping mine?"

There was a faint smile on the girl's lips, and her mother thought, as she so often did, that she never as long as she lived would understand her daughter.

"But of course, dear, you are under no obligation to endure cruelty! The law—"

Virginia raised herself upon her elbow.

"I *am* under obligation to endure it," she replied. "I have sworn to love him, and while he wishes me to be with him, I shall be with him. He has done all he undertook to do. He has done more. He has not only given you comfort and security, not only provided funds for this marvelous cure of Pansy's—he has let me come to you and stay all this time, because he trusted me. He knew I should go back, because I promised to. I am going back."

"Dear one, we will not argue," was the gentle response, after a pause during which the elder lady decided to change her tactics. "You're weak as yet, and must rest and grow strong. Thank God, you need not decide at once, since the doctor would most certainly not sanction your traveling at present. I only touched upon this painful subject because I wanted you to know that, without any treachery to

Osbert, you have inadvertently allowed me to know how things stand between you and him, so there is no need for further concealment. You may rest safely in the knowledge that you have loving guardians who will not let you suffer from the caprice of a perverted mind—the unreasoning cruelty of a monomaniac.”

“How long have I been ill?” asked Virginia, after a pause.

“This is Monday. You got home on Friday.”

After a few minutes’ silence, the invalid asked, in her usual tone, for news of Pansy and Tony.

Pansy was wonderfully well. The air of Worthing was doing for her even more than the doctors had expected. It had been at the request of Doctor Danby that they had come to Worthing. He had a friend in practice there, in whose skill and kindness he had the utmost confidence. Pansy adored her new doctor, and the electric baths were proving a great success.

Tony was out a great deal with his friend, Mullins. Gerald had gone to town, but was coming down on Wednesday.

A tap on the door announced the doctor’s visit. He was pleased to find the patient so much improved.

“When shall I be able to travel?” she asked him.

“Oh, some time next week, I hope,” he answered comfortably.

Mrs. Mynors looked triumphant. She went out of the room with the doctor, and Virginia was left to her own reflections.

“The caprice of a perverted mind!” That phrase stuck in her head. It seemed to her that it did just exactly describe Gaunt’s conduct. It is possible, however, that a perverted mind may be put right again if it encounters some agency sufficiently powerful. While she had been in town, Doctor

Danby had spoken to her of her husband.

“He was one of the most interesting boys I ever saw,” had been his verdict. “I was very sorry for him. He was thoroughly mishandled, misunderstood, by the old ladies, his great-aunts, who were all the kith and kin he had.

“I saw him several times during his university period,” the doctor had continued. “The authorities there thought as highly of him as I did. Then came the debacle. Some girl upon whom he had fixed all his heart failed him. He could not stand it. The weak spot in his nature was touched—his fatal tendency to concentrate violently upon one object. He went all to pieces for a while—dashed off abroad—and I lost touch with him.”

It seemed to the girl, who revolved this information in her mind, that her own duty lay clear. If she could but overcome his prejudice—his perverted idea of her—might she not do something, after all, toward making him happy?

Mims had once praised her for her inveterate habit of doing her duty. Easy enough had duty been when it had been a case of Pansy and Tony. Now, because duty was formidable and difficult, was she to shrink from it?

She covered her face with her hands; she stopped her ears against an imaginary voice. She would go back—she must go back! But if Gerald joined in the argument, would she be able to resist?

Well she knew her mother, and she was positive that, being on such terms of confidence as she had lately established with young Rosenberg, she would tell him what she had inadvertently learned of the true inwardness of Virginia’s marriage. At the mere thought, the girl writhed.

She was going back, whatever they said, whatever they did! She must and

would go back, in fulfillment of her promise.

Yet her mind was wracked with the conflict. If she went back—if she entered the beast's den a second time—it would be final. Suppose the worst were to prove true? Suppose that nothing she could do would disarm Gaunt—that he persisted in his hate, that he took delight in thwarting her, bullying her, frightening her? How vilely so ever he used her, *still she would have to be his wife!* He would shut her up in captivity, keep her from those she loved, and yet she would have to be his wife!

Could she bear it?

She remembered her own boast: "You can cut me to pieces with a knife if you choose, when I come back. Anything, if you will let me go to Pansy!"

Well, he had let her go. He had performed that, as he had performed his half of the first bargain between them. She, so far, had performed nothing at all. She had spent his money freely, and had lived away from him. Was her wild promise nothing but an empty boast, after all? Was she content to take these favors she had wrung from him, but to refuse to pay when pay day came around?

All at once she knew that her mind was made up. She was going back.

She bounded out of bed; but soon found, when standing up, that she was far from fit to travel that day. She succeeded, however, in finding a writing block and a pencil, and, returning to bed, wrote a hasty line to Gaunt. In it she said only that she had had a tiresome chill, but that she was almost well and intended to reach home without fail on Wednesday.

Her mother returned to the room just as she had sealed and stamped her letter.

"Good child!" said she, smiling. "I was just about to suggest that you should send Osbert a line, to keep him

quiet. You've told him what the doctor said about hoping you could travel next week?"

"I've told him I can't travel to-day," replied Virginia, and Mrs. Mynors carried off the letter to post.

CHAPTER XXIV.

When Grover presently entered her room with lunch, Virginia was quick to perceive an estrangement. The woman's face was set in stern lines, and her eyes were cast down, except at such moments as she fancied that Virginia was not looking, when she sent furtive, searching glances toward the wistful face upon the pillow.

Virginia wondered what had happened, but felt too languid to inquire, dreading that some kind of a scene might follow. By degrees she gathered, more from hint than direct speech, that the main grievance was having been turned out of the room during the two nights of delirium.

After what her mother had just revealed, of her unconscious ravings, she could not but be thankful that Grover had not heard them. She did not know of the short dialogue that had taken place between the two deadly enemies outside her door that morning.

Mrs. Mynors had arisen from the sofa and gone out to speak to Grover, who had been in waiting outside with early tea for her mistress, Virginia being still asleep.

"I hope Mrs. Gaunt is better, ma'am?" Grover had asked, with prim frigidity.

"Better? Poor, unhappy child! It might be better for her, perhaps, if there were no chance of her recovery," had been the unlooked-for reply, delivered with exaggerated emphasis.

"Indeed, ma'am?"

"Yes, indeed and indeed! God help her, poor, innocent lamb! You need not think to keep anything dark in

future, you and your wretched master! In her delirium the unhappy creature has let out everything. And you—you must have known! You who came here with her as his spy! Mounting guard over her night and day, lest she should let her people know of his diabolical cruelty! I have outwitted you, and now I know everything. I shall find means to protect my injured child."

"I have no idea what you mean, ma'am," Grover had replied, inflexibly respectful.

"Oh, no, of course not! You may as well drop the mask. I know you, and I know him," had been the instant retort, as Mrs. Mynors, in her elegant wrapper, had disappeared into her own room.

Grover had gone about all that day, wracking her brains as to what she ought to do.

She was quite confident that she had been turned out of the room in order that these revelations—in which she did not believe—might be made, or be said to have been made. They were part, she was sure, of some plot that was being hatched. Ought she to write to Mr. Gaunt and tell him that she thought he had better come to Worthing and take his wife home? She was a slow-witted, but very sensible woman, and she feared that, should she take such a course, Gaunt might fear that things were more serious than they actually were. Yet she distrusted Mrs. Mynors profoundly, and watched her as closely as she could. She overheard her say to the doctor, outside Virginia's room:

"She ought to be kept very quiet. Her nerves are all wrong. Mind you make her stay in bed as long as you can. Don't let her think of traveling till next week at the soonest."

She also saw her come out of the sick room with the letter just written by Virginia to Gaunt in her hand. She carried it into her own room, and something in the way she looked at it pro-

duced in Grover an overpowering impression that she did not mean to forward it.

With a determination to ascertain, the woman knocked at the door some minutes later, and was sure she heard the rustle of paper and the hasty closing of a drawer before Mrs. Mynors told her to come in.

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but should I take Mrs. Gaunt's letter to post? It is almost time."

"Thanks. I have just sent it off."

This made the servant certain that her suspicion was correct. She went slowly into Virginia's room, more and more perplexed as to what she ought to do, and wondering what were her mistress' own feelings in the matter. Since the Bignor episode, she had been so shaken in her faith in Virginia that she was half ready to believe it was a case of like mother like daughter, and that the dainty butterfly would never return to gloomy Omberleigh. The idea filled her with resentment.

"His fault," she thought to herself. "Such a place, enough to give you a fit of the blues—dirty and dull and drab! He ought to have had it all done up for her—make her think that he wanted to please her! He don't know enough to go indoors when it rains, not where a woman's concerned; that's very certain. But, oh, gracious goodness, what will happen to him if she turns out a light one? It's my belief he'd never stand it. He'd go mad or cut his throat."

Gloomily she ran ribbons into underlinen, made the bed, and went about her usual sick-room duties. All the time she was wondering whether she could not "say something." The difficulty lay in thinking what to say.

Virginia was very quiet—unusually so. When Grover had gone out, she locked the door, put on a dressing gown, and sat up by the fire. She found herself stronger than she had

thought. Her fever having passed, she was all right. She was certain that there was no reason why she should not travel on Wednesday, but she determined to say nothing about it to her mother.

When next Mrs. Mynors came in to see her, she was lying with eyes half closed, and whispered that she felt very weak and was not equal to talking. This was satisfactory, and the visitor crept away.

Next morning, the girl, with the elasticity of youth, awoke feeling very much better. Grover could not but remark it. Yet, when her mother came in, she was languid and monosyllabic.

She could not, however, escape a renewal of the bombardment of yesterday with regard to her return to Omberleigh. Mrs. Mynors brought in her work after lunch, and attacked the subject with determination. She was met with a meekness that surprised her. Virginia owned that she was at present too unwell to face anything difficult—to undergo any trying experience. Next week it would be different. She thought they might postpone serious discussion. The wind was somewhat taken out of her opponent's sails, but there was no doubt that this depression and invalidism were satisfactory in her eyes. She made, as she thought, quite certain that her daughter had no intention of traveling at present.

"I'm sure Osbert doesn't expect me. He hasn't written at all. He is waiting to hear again, I suppose."

"Not written! When I told him how ill you are! Oh, Virgie, what a brute the man is!"

The speaker omitted to mention that in her letter to her son-in-law she had begged him not to write to Virgie, as his letters "agitated her unaccountably," and that she herself had heard from him that morning to the effect that he hoped a doctor had been called in.

She went away after a while and wrote to Gerald in town:

I think there is no doubt she is growing to see that we are right. I am letting her come along at her own pace. The discovery that we know her secret has shaken her, and she has at least given up all idea of traveling at present. That being so, I shall run up to town to-morrow morning, as there are several things I must do. You and I can return here together in the evening. I will come up by the early express, and if you were to take tickets for the *matinée* at the Criterion, I should not object! One gets so bored here with invalids all day!

That night, when Grover came into the room to make the final arrangements, she found Mrs. Mynors there, in the act of saying good night to a limp and disconsolate daughter.

"I am running up to town on business by the eight-four to-morrow, Grover," said she, turning around with that alarming sweetness which convinced the hearer that some demand upon her good nature would be immediately made. "I wonder whether, while you are making Mrs. Gaunt's tea to-morrow morning, you would bring me a cup. These lodging-house people are so disagreeable about a little thing like that. Bring it at seven o'clock sharp, if you would be so kind."

"Very well, mum," replied Grover, in her gruffest tones, which were very gruff indeed.

"Good-by, my precious. Rest well," murmured the lady, bending over the bed. "We shall cheer up when Gerald comes back, and if you are very good, I'll beg the doctor to let you get up on Thursday."

"If I feel well enough," sighed Virginia, closing her eyes.

Grover felt all her distrust reviving. She was certain that Virgie was feeling almost completely recovered. Was there anything up? Some plot? Had young Rosenberg planned for the mother to be away in town while he

came down here and carried off Virginia in his car?

She turned from the closing of the door upon Mrs. Mynors' exit with a very grim mouth.

The patient was sitting bolt upright in bed, with an expression so changed, so alert, that she paused just where she stood, in amazement.

"Grover," panted the girl, in a shaken, excited voice, "come here! I want to speak to you."

Grover approached slowly and doubtfully, suspicion written all over her. When she was quite near, Virginia drew her down so that she sat upon the bed, and put her arms around her, laying her head upon a singularly unresponsive bosom.

"Grover, I want you to help me," she whispered. "I'm going to do something desperate—something secret—and I can't do it unless you stand by me."

The woman paused. She was angry with herself for being influenced—as influenced she undoubtedly was—by the clinging arms and the nestling golden head.

"Now what have you got in your head, ma'am?" she asked, as coldly as she could. She almost jumped when she heard the reply:

"I want you to help me run away."

"Never!" Putting aside the girlish embrace, she rose to her feet, her homely face stern and reproachful. "Never! Not while I'm in his service! He may have scared you, as your mother tells me he has, but if so, you should have known better. It's only because you know so little of him, and he so unused to women. Oh, my dear, my dear, I don't suppose for a minute you'll listen to me, but I must say it! You go back, my dear, and do your duty. Your place is there with him. You chose him, and it's God's law that you should cleave to him, though I have no right to be talking like this, ma'am.

But if it was the last word I ever was to say——"

"Grover, Grover," cried Virginia, grasping a solid arm and shaking it, "what on earth are you talking about? Isn't that just what I want you to do? To take me back to Omberleigh? What did you think I meant?"

Grover's face was a study. It was as if layer after layer of gloom and apprehension were passing from its surface.

"That's what you mean? Run away home?" she panted.

"To Omberleigh—yes." Virginia could not bring her lips to utter the word "home," but Grover did not remark such a detail, though Gaunt had noted it fast enough in the letter she had written him the previous week. "I don't know whether it is that my chill has made me a little mad," whispered Virgie, "but I feel as if I am in prison. I feel as if they had made up their minds that I should not go back, and you know I must. I've overstayed my time already."

"Well, ma'am, if that's what you want—to go back where you belong—you shall go, though an army stood in the way!" cried Grover, with such good will that Virgie flung her arms around her again, this time to meet with a warm response. Then she slid out of bed, and stood, her arms outspread, making graceful motions to show that she was strong and vigorous.

"I'm a horrid little cheat," she said, smiling. "I'm afraid I tried to make mother think I was feeling very weak, so that she might not be afraid to go off by the early train and leave me. Grover, I've looked up all the trains. You must pack to-night, and we can get to town by one o'clock. We must go straight through. There's a train with a dining car, getting us to Derby at six-thirty-four, and we can wire for the car to meet us. I hope I'm not being very silly, but it seems to me the only

way to get free of it all. Another thing is the parting from Pansy. I shall go without saying anything at all to her, and leave a letter for her. She's so happy here, she won't really miss me, and it'll save her a bad fit of crying if I slip away. Me, too, for that matter," she added, coloring. "I can't help feeling the parting, you know, Grover."

"That I well believe, ma'am, but it is but for a time. She's doing so nicely that she'll be able to come to Omberleigh before long, and think how she'll enjoy lying on the terrace and playing with Cosmo and Damian!"

Virgie had to laugh, though a pang shot through her heart. Little did this loyal Grover know the dreadful truth!

At the thought of the malice that awaited her, the unknown suffering in store, she flinched and for a moment felt faint. Then she rallied.

This precipitate flight was, she knew, her only chance of preserving her self-respect. When Gerald returned, it would all be different, somehow. Now, before she had time to think, she must make her dash for duty. What she had said in her delirium she knew not; but she knew well enough that during those confidential moments, seated in the field below the Roman Villa, she had admitted her marital unhappiness, and that Gerald had understood.

"I can't understand one thing," she said, as she lay watching Grover draw out her trunk, open it, and begin her packing methodically, "and that is why Mr. Gaunt has not written to me since I took my chill."

"I think I can tell you, ma'am. It's because your letters to him have been stopped."

"Grover!"

"If, when we get home, ma'am, you find that he has had the letter you wrote this afternoon, why, I'll beg your mamma's pardon for what I have said. But I'm sure she opened it, and I don't believe she ever sent it to post. An-

other thing, ma'am. Muriel, the lodging-house maid, told me that Mrs. Mynors had a letter with the Manton postmark yesterday. Why didn't she tell you she had heard?"

"I thought it strange he didn't write," said Virgie, knitting puzzled brows. "But, Grover, they have no right to do such things! Even if mamma thinks, as she seems to think, that he—Mr. Gaunt—is not—I mean if she doesn't like him and doesn't want me to go away, she has no right to tamper with letters, do you think?"

"It's not for me, ma'am, to pass any remarks upon what your mamma does. But I think it is for me to let you know she done it," replied Grover, with demure emphasis.

Virgie could not help smiling, in spite of her tumultuous emotions.

Grover proved a most able accomplice and conspirator.

She duly brought tea to Mrs. Mynors next morning, and said, in subdued tones, that Mrs. Gaunt had not passed a very good night. She was now sleeping and had better not be disturbed. Would Mrs. Mynors mind slipping downstairs without coming into her room?

This had the desired effect. The elder Virginia departed for her little jaunt to town—traveling by the first-class-only express—with a perfectly serene mind. Virginia the younger was, she felt convinced, wholly contented with her bed for that day.

Grover, meanwhile, completed her preparations with the utmost composure. She went down, paid the landlady, and explained to her that Mrs. Gaunt was called home unexpectedly and wanted to slip away without distressing the little lady.

Noiselessly the trunks were carried downstairs; noiselessly, though with a beating heart, Virginia followed.

It was not until Worthing had been left behind; not, indeed, until they had

passed, safe and unrecognized, through London, that she could relax the tension of her will.

Now the die was cast. She had chosen. She was doing what she firmly believed to be right. Once before, when in straits, she had taken a way out that had seemed the only way, but that she had yet known to be unworthy of her. Now she was blindly doing the hard thing because it was the right thing. The consequences were not in her hands.

CHAPTER XXV.

The rain that had so interfered with Rosenberg's plans and spoiled the close of the motoring day seemed to mark also the end of summer. The weather ever since had been gray and autumnal. In Derbyshire the change was more marked than in Sussex. A wild wind moaned in the black pines of Omberleigh, and brown leaves drifted upon the blast, as Gaunt rode forth to Sessions that Wednesday morning.

His mood was one not only of depression, but of anxiety. He had hardly realized how much he had built upon Virginia's cheering accounts of her own restored health until he had received his mother-in-law's feline epistle telling him of a severe chill and consequent fever. The wording was careful, even clever, but she had conveyed with full force the impression that she had meant to convey, which was that the fever and delirium were more the result of distress of mind than of the actual chill—that the prospect of returning to her loveless marriage and gloomy home were working untold harm to the patient and hindering recovery.

Since the receipt of this most disquieting letter, no word from Worthing had reached him. Morning after morning the empty post bag mocked him. To-day he was making up his mind that if he held to his resolution and re-

mained silent—if he adhered to his foolhardy determination to prove his wife to the uttermost—he would lose her altogether.

He still told himself that she would do her duty at all costs. He was, however, beginning to perceive that the influence now being brought to bear upon her might succeed in persuading her that to return to him was *not* her duty. After all, in view of what he had made her bear, could he say that he thought it was her duty?

Mrs. Mynors spoke as if the illness were serious. He knew she was a liar; he knew she wished to hurt him; yet, after all, it might be true. He had dealt such a blow at Virgie's tenderest feelings as might well shock a sensitive girl into real illness. Neither had he done anything since they had parted to allay her fears. He had not so much as suggested the change of heart that awaited her. As the date of her return drew near—as she contemplated the renewal of her martyrdom—her flesh might well shrink from the demand made upon it by the dauntless spirit.

Violently though he struggled against indulging hope, it had all the same risen insurgent when he had got Virginia's letter fixing Saturday as the date of her return.

He had lain sleepless most of Friday night, planning what he could do or say when they met at the railway station; living over again his drive at her side, through the summer dusk, on the night of her departure, when she had been, in her absorption, hardly conscious of his presence. He had wondered whether he could break through the tongue-tied gloom that held him like an evil spell and let her see something—not too much at first—of what he felt.

His mortification, when he had received his mother-in-law's wounding letter, had been proportionately great. The intensity of his feeling had surprised and half frightened him.

Since that dark moment—silence.

He rode into town now in a mood that alternated between something that was a colorable imitation of despair and a haunting notion that perhaps some letter or telegram might be awaiting him when he returned home in the evening.

There was much business to transact that day. It was half past four before he was free; and, as he walked along the High Street, making for the inn where his horse was put up, he came face to face with Ferris.

"Ha, Gaunt, how goes it?" cried Percy, wringing his hand with effusion, proud that the passers-by should see him on such terms with Gaunt of Omberleigh. "Not looking very fit—what? Why don't you run down to Worthing for the week-end and give your wife a surprise? Do you good. Well, I can give you the latest news of her. Been down there myself, staying over Sunday with Rosenberg, at the Beauséjour."

"You have?" Gaunt's tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He could not own that he himself had had no news of Virginia.

"Yes, not a bad little hole, Worthing. Plenty of sun and sea air and so on. Think it might suit Joey and the kids for a month or two, later on. Pity Mrs. Gaunt knocked up, wasn't it, though?"

"Yes, I was very much vexed to hear it," Gaunt was able by this to reply with his natural brevity.

"Enough to make her, though, wasn't it? Pretty bad generalship on Rosenberg's part. You take my tip and run down, Gaunt. They tell me she's deuced seedy." There was meaning in the tone.

"She makes light of it to me," said Gaunt, choosing his line quickly. "Tell me what you know of it."

"Oh, well, of course you heard that she got wet through driving in an open cart in the pouring rain late at night,

trying to reach Petworth in time for the last train or something. Of course Rosenberg's car is a beauty—you couldn't expect it to break down like that. Still, to send off his chauffeur to meet me at Chichester, leaving himself and Mrs. Gaunt stranded in a place where there was no accommodation, no telegraph — Gad, if you had seen the hole where they spent the night, Gaunt, I think you'd have given him a bit of the rough side of your tongue."

"The same idea has occurred to me," said Gaunt dryly, "but I understood that the whole thing could not be avoided—it was quite an accident. Still, to drive her in the wet, without even an umbrella— No wonder my wife fell ill."

There was a certain relief in his heart, amid all the turmoil of jealousy and vexation. The circumstances were in themselves quite enough to account for illness, without his own shortcomings being in any way responsible.

"You see, she had nothing for the night," explained Ferris, "so I suppose she couldn't take off her wet things. I had a line from Rosenberg this morning about the directors' meeting, and he mentioned that the doctor won't let her leave her room."

"So I understood. I think I had better take your advice and run down. Thank you, Ferris. I'm glad to have seen you. My mother-in-law has the art of making the most of things, and I wasn't sure just how unwell my wife is."

After the exchange of a few commonplace, they parted. Ferris watched Gaunt limp into the inn yard, and turned away with an involuntary "Poor devil!" He stood irresolute upon the pavement for a minute or two, then strolled into the post office and wrote a telegram to Rosenberg:

Gaunt coming down. Be on your guard.

He was eager to stand well with both

parties, and this was his idea of accomplishing it.

Never had the avenue that led to his own house seemed to Gaunt so wild, so desolate, as when he rode up it this evening. The sun was already setting, gleaming fierce and threateningly red through the purple, ragged clouds that all day long had veiled it.

He knew that everything was over, but he also knew that to be any longer passive was beyond him. He was going to London at once, by that same late train from Derby that had taken her from him. To sleep in a bed this night would be insupportable. If he were in the train, he would feel that he was not wasting hours of enforced inaction. He would be in London in time to take an early train to Worthing, and he would arrive there during the morning and ascertain his exact fate.

Now he knew how firmly he had built upon the idea of Virginia's faith. In the depths of his twisted, shrunken, yet living, heart, he had been certain that she would keep her word. He still believed that she would have kept it had not revelation come to her. She and Rosenberg having discovered the feeling that existed between them, how could she come back to her nominal husband with a lie upon her lips?

As soon as she was well enough, she meant to write and explain. He was sure of that. He kept insisting upon it in his mind. He would save her that effort. He would go to her and make things as easy as he could. He would explain that he knew himself to have forfeited all claim.

His horse's hoofs were beating to the refrain: "All over! All over!"

What a fool he had made of himself over the redecoration of that room! That room which from henceforth no human foot would enter. Only the previous night he had sat there for a couple of hours, playing upon the new piano

he had bought for her, and conjuring up the picture of her, outlined against the delicate ivory walls, each tint of her faint, sea-shell coloring properly emphasized by the appropriate background. He would always see her like that in future. His desolate house would be haunted for all the desolate time to come.

He rode around by the stable yard and gave his horse to the groom. Such was the disorder of his mind that he flinched from being seen even by Hemming. He forgot that he had hoped the midday post might bring him news. He went out of the yard, around by the garden, and in through the window of his own den.

Seating himself by his writing table, he found a time-table, but he did not even open it. His mind was too thoroughly preoccupied with its own bitterness. He rested his elbows on the desk, propping his chin upon them in a sort of exhaustion of defeat.

When he had wandered, that day in London, all unwitting, into the art gallery, his two angels had wandered with him—the good and the evil. The good had taken his hand, had whispered persuasively that his sad days were over, had shown him something so fair and sweet that— Ah, but the black spirit at his elbow had pushed forward: "After all these years in my service, do you think I am going to stand aside and see you join the opposition?"

He heard the dressing bell ring and realized that if he meant to catch that train, he must call Hemming and have his things put together at once. Yet still he could not move. The bonds of his misery seemed to hold him tied to his chair, tied to this ghastly, echoing house full of phantoms.

He had had no food since about noon, and his emptiness had passed beyond the stage of hunger. It made him dazed. As he sat there, it was as if life surged within him for the last time,

urging him to go to Worthing and face his doom like a man, and as if the old house rejoiced over his stupor, murmuring that his place was here among the ruins of his own brutal folly and fruitless hate.

With an effort he stood up, found matches, lit the gas. He must and would look at that railway guide. Yet when the light shone upon his untidy table, he forgot all about Bradshaw. There, lying where he had laid them before going out, were certain cases of jewelry which had that morning come back from London. He had had everything cleaned, and some things reset, in the phantom hope of a time when he might be allowed to give her presents.

He fixed his eyes upon the leather cases as if they had been so many coffins. For the moment he gave up the attempt to consider his expedition. It seemed so important that he should realize just how futile his attempts to undo the past must inevitably prove.

A light step came along the passage. He almost groaned, for it might have been hers, and he dreaded lest all his life he should be pursued by those haunting footfalls. Then a touch upon the handle of the door startled him in a second from apathy. The handle was turning; the door was about to open. What should he see? In his present abnormal frame of mind he might see anything—might even cause his thought of her to take shape, so that she would stand in bodily presence before him.

It seemed to him only what he had foreseen when the slowly opening door revealed her standing there.

He knew that it was her wraith, because she was so white—so unnaturally white. She wore white, too. Her eyes were dilated, with a dread that she could not conceal. It is possible that he might have heard the beating of her heart had his own not pulsed so loudly.

He rose slowly to his feet—slowly, to match her entrance. He neither

moved nor spoke as she shut the door carefully behind her. As she did so, the thought moved in his mind that he had never heard of a ghost who closed a door. But his mind was a long way off. The part of him now active was something utterly different.

Then she moved forward toward him, as he stood in the circle of light. She came on bravely until she was within a few paces of him. Then she paused and gave a little sound between a laugh and a gasp.

"Well," said she, and valiantly held out her hand, "I have come back, you see."

He was so startled at her voice that he gave a low cry. Moving suddenly—always with him a mark of strong agitation—he first grasped her hand in both his own, then, retaining it with one, passed the other hesitatingly up her arm till it rested upon her warm shoulder.

"My God," he said, "you are real! Speak, Virginia—are you real?"

She set her teeth in the effort not to flinch, but she shook so that her trembling was perceptible to him.

"Real? Yes, of course. Did you think I was a ghost?" she asked, shrinking a little backward, so that his hand fell from her shoulder.

"I did. How could you come here? You were ill. Ferris said—"

"But I am better, and I told you in my letter that I should come the first minute I was able."

"What letter?"

She shuddered a little. Then it was true! Her letter had been kept back!

"I telegraphed to-day," she stammered, more and more nervous. "You were out, but the motor met me at the station. When I arrived, I told them not to tell you I was here. I—I thought I would tell you myself. Oh, are you angry with me?"

"Angry?" he said, with breaking voice. He turned his head aside, for

he could not control the working of his face.

"Why are you so surprised to see me?" she ventured, after a pause. "You knew I should come back."

"How could I know it?" he asked, almost inaudibly.

"I was on my honor," she answered, equally low. Then, gathering force as he stood still with averted face: "I gave you my word to submit to anything if you let me go to Pansy. She doesn't need me any more, so I am here." She waited a moment, but still he did not speak. "I am well and strong now," she persisted bravely. "I can do anything you wish. What are you going to do with me?"

"There's only one thing I can do with you," came the answer. "I can let you go."

She stood immovably, her eyes fixed upon him. The dread lest he was not perfectly sane once more assailed her. Her mother had spoken of him as a monomaniac. Perhaps Virginia feared him more at that moment than ever before.

When he turned abruptly, with his characteristic jerk, she started and shrank only too visibly.

"Explain," he said. "Sit down in this chair—you look as white as a sheet—and explain. You tell me you are well and strong. Your mother, in a letter which I got last Saturday morning, told me you were seriously ill. Ferris, whom I met to-day in town, said that the doctor would not let you get up. There's some discrepancy here."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I know," she said. "May I tell you about it?"

"Certainly." He had seated her in the old wooden writing chair from which he had risen. He fetched another for himself and placed it near. The lamp fell upon her burnished hair, and upon his strained face as he raised it to her. It struck her that he was

very different from her memory of him. His eyes had surely grown larger, his face thinner. His close-cut hair changed his appearance. He wore other, nicer clothes than those in which she was accustomed to see him. But chiefly he looked younger—less assured. There was something almost wistful in his expression.

She gave a swift, appraising glance, and lowered her eyes to the table. In her nervousness she would have liked to take up a paper knife and play with it. Some deep instinct told her to be simple and perfectly straightforward. She let her hands lie in her lap.

"Mamma," she began, "did not want me to come back. I—I suppose she told you of the vexatious motor accident that obliged Mr. Rosenberg and me to stop the night in a horrid little wayside inn?"

"She said something of it—yes."

"Of course I was most anxious not to have to be away all night, because I was to leave Worthing next day to come back here, and so, when the car did not return, we drove in a little open cart, through pouring rain, to try to catch a train—the last train—and just missed it. I got very wet, and I couldn't dry my things properly, the place was so dirty and comfortless; and so I got a little feverish chill. It was not much, but it made me delirious for some hours. I think it was partly because I was vexed and anxious. You see, I had written to you to say I was coming, and it was annoying to be stopped like that. Anyway, when I was sensible again, mamma said I—I had been saying things—you understand—things about you—when I didn't know what I was talking about."

"I see." His tone was dry.

"So she begged me not to come back. She told the doctor to keep me in bed, though I was practically well. I didn't know what to do. I pretended to give in. Then she went to town—this morn-

ing—for a day's shopping or something, and Grover and I ran away without telling anybody. I hope you think I did right. You see, I knew I ought to come. And Grover told me that mamma had done something she really had no right to do—she had intercepted a letter from me to you. Ah, I know it was partly my fault. I don't know what I may have said when I was wandering. She thought she was acting for the best, no doubt. But I felt unsafe, somehow."

"I suppose you mean," said Gaunt slowly, "that your mother thought you had better not come back to me at all."

"I think so—yes. She said the law would give me relief——"

"She was very probably right. And yet you came? It didn't strike you that that was a foolish thing to do? You didn't reflect that possession is nine points of the law?"

He was looking fully at her, and she met his look. She did not hesitate.

"I had not to consider that," was her instant reply. "I had to do what I knew to be right. I had to keep my word."

"You came back, perhaps, in order to lay the case before me? To see if I would set you free?"

"Certainly not!" was the steady answer. "That wouldn't be fair."

"Why not fair?"

"Because you and I made an agreement. You have kept your half—you have done all you promised; but I"—the color rushed over her face—"I haven't done any of my share."

Not at all theatrically, but as naturally as an old Italian peasant will kiss the Madonna's feet, he slipped from his chair to his knees. So quietly that it did not startle Virginia at all, he took up one of the hands that lay in her lap and raised it to his lips. The action, so unlike him, the silence in which he performed it, amazed her so that she neither moved nor spoke.

He replaced her hand, laying it ten-

derly down, and seemed as if about to speak, from his lowly position at her feet. Then, with his characteristic, brusque suddenness, he rose and stood beside her, almost over her.

"God has used me better than I deserved," he muttered gruffly. "He has let me prove—prove to the hilt—that there is such a thing as a perfectly noble woman. Virginia, there shall be a way out for you. If you think my word of any value, I give it solemnly—I will make things right somehow. I may not be able to do it at once; I must think the matter over carefully. In the meantime, I want you to understand my position." He paused a moment, and then spoke more fluently, as if the thing he expressed had long been in his mind and came easily from his lips. "I had not been twenty-four hours your husband before I came to myself. It was as if—only I can't express it—as if your innocence were a looking-glass in which I saw the kind of thing I was. Ever since, I have been your humble servant. I—I tried to let you see this, but of course it was hopeless. You were ill, and they told me to keep out of your way. Then, when you left me—your heart was full of your little sister, occupied with your own grief. I couldn't force on you the consideration of mine."

He paused, and she knew it was to summon command of his voice.

"And the idea came to me that I would wait—that I would find out, for a certainty, that you really were as fine as I had grown to think you. I wanted to prove that you were heroic enough to come back to—to the sort of thing that, as you believed, awaited you here. So I wouldn't write to you, as I longed to—I just kept silence. And you came. You are here. I'm such a fool at saying what I mean, but I must make you understand that, for so long as it may be necessary for you to remain, you are sacred. I—I will ask you to let

me eat with you, and be with you sometimes, because of—er—the household. But, once for all, I want you to feel quite sure that you have nothing to fear from me."

First amazement, then a rush of pity and sympathy, held Virginia dumb. So taciturn had the man proved during their brief intercourse that this outburst seemed wholly out of character. She could not know that it was far more characteristic of the real man than the sullen, frozen surface he had hitherto presented.

She had no words in which to answer it. The world had turned upside down; she could not reason, could not think out what this might ultimately mean for her. She could but grasp the fact of her husband's complete change of front. Seated in the old chair, worn shiny by many years of usage, she lifted her eyes to his, first in wonder, then in a gladness that shone out in a smile that transfigured her speaking face. He was quite near—almost stooping over her—and he held his breath with the intensity of the thrill that ran through him.

"O-o-oh!" she said tremulously. "Oh, Osbert!"

The sound of his name so moved him that he almost lost his self-control. It sounded like a caress—it was as if she had kissed him. He told himself that he would count up the times she said it, from now until his final exit—would treasure them in his mind and call them kisses.

At this moment the gong for dinner boomed in the hall. It brought both of them back with a start to the present moment. Virgie put her hands to her eyes as if she had been dreaming. The man was, first of all, uncomfortably conscious of riding breeches and gaiters.

"Good heavens, dinner—and I haven't dressed! I can't sit down with you like this!"

"Oh, yes, please do," she said, rising from her seat with a new gayety, as if a weight had rolled away. "Please don't keep me waiting while you dress. I'm so hungry, and I want to show you my fine, new appetite. Besides, Grover is sure to drive me upstairs at an unearthly hour. She's been clucking after me all day like an old mother hen, because, you see, I actually got out of bed to travel. So don't waste any more time, but just come in as you are."

"I'll wash my hands. Shan't be five minutes," he stammered, the sudden, everyday intimacy intoxicating him like a fiery, hitherto untasted wine. "Wait for me, won't you?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

When Gaunt entered the dining room, his wife was standing before the fire, its red glow making her white dress and white arms rosy. Hemming was busily employed in fixing a screen at the back of her chair.

"I asked Hemming to move my place," said she. "I hope you don't mind. I felt so far away, there at the end of the table. If I sit here, we can talk much better."

"A good idea."

Gaunt hoped his voice sounded natural as he spoke. He hardly knew what he said. Such was the turmoil within him that he wondered whether his own appetite would fail, as hers had done when last they had eaten together. Yet he was, as a matter of fact, ravenously hungry, and the taking of food steadied him down and made him feel more normal. He found himself obliged, however, to leave the burden of conversation to her. She talked on bravely, about Doctor Danby and his kindness to Pansy, until, the servants having left the room to fetch the next course, she turned half-frightened, half-challenging eyes to her husband.

"I'm afraid I'm 'prattling,' as you call it," she said deprecatingly. "Shall I leave off? I will, if I'm teasing you."

"Forgive me. I'm not really unresponsive—only a bit bewildered," he answered. "You know that nothing you could conceivably say could fail to interest me. Don't remind me of my unconverted days."

She could not answer, for Hemming returned at the moment, but she smiled and colored.

Left to themselves before the peaches and grapes, they fell silent. The memory of the former occasion tied the girl's tongue. The man was facing his problem. Virginia sat there with him, in his house—his wife. She had come back prepared to accept this fate. Had he the strength to resist, the greatness not to take advantage of her integrity and courage?

The first thing he must do was to ascertain, if possible, her feeling for Gerald Rosenberg, and also whether the young man was really earnest in his love for her. If he could be satisfied on both these points, he told himself that he must make atonement in the one possible way. His white lily should never go through the mire of a divorce court, nor must lack of money stand between her and the man of her choice.

Such thoughts as these are inimical to conversation. He sat for some minutes peeling a peach, and then sensing the delight of watching her while she ate it.

Grover entered quietly.

"I just looked in to say I hope you will come upstairs punctually at nine, ma'am," said she, with a keen glance at the two.

"Yes, Grover, I'll be good to-night, though I warn you your tyranny is nearly over," said Virgie, her eyes full of mischief. How gay she was when the gayety was not dashed out of her!

As Grover retired, she rose from her chair, and looked at her husband pleadingly. "I wonder if you would do something for me to-night—something I specially want you to do?" said she in tones of coaxing.

"But of course!" He was on his feet in a moment.

"I want you to play to me—on the piano. You played that—first—night—do you remember?"

"You liked it?"

She nodded.

"I used to hear you afterward—when I was upstairs. Grover used to open the door for me to listen," she confessed.

"Really?" He showed his intense pleasure in this tribute. "Come," he said, "I have got a new piano to show you."

They went together down the passage to the door of her own sitting room, now, needless to say, unlocked. They passed in, and Gaunt thought himself overpaid for anything he had ever suffered when he heard her first "O-o-oh!" of surprise and pleasure.

The ivory room lay in warm light. The fire danced on the hearth. And upon the pale-blue, rose-garlanded hearthrug lay Cosmo and Damian, with bows to match their surroundings. The graceful, wine-dark furniture gleamed in the mellow lamplight. Every piece in the room was perfection in its way. There was a Chesterfield at right angles to the fire. Beside it, a small revolving table bookcase alone struck a note of frank modernity, and needed but books and work to complete it.

"You like it?" he asked, trying to mask his eager wistfulness.

"I should think so! You never told me a word! You had this all done! Oh, how curious!" she murmured in wonder, recalling with a shock the dream that she had dreamed—how she had sought in vain for the old furniture in the attic, and, going into this

room where she now stood, had found it full of formless whiteness.

"Why do you call it curious?" he asked.

"Because I dreamed about it," she answered, laughing shamefacedly. "I dreamed that I had come back and was looking for you—that I was up in the attics, and couldn't find this furniture, and that when I came downstairs, this room was empty and all white and ghostly."

"Did you succeed in finding me—in your dream?"

"Yes." She laughed again. "But it was all stupid—you know dreams are! Oh, what a darling piano! And that fine old book cupboard with glass doors! A *secrétaire*—isn't that the proper name for it?"

"Do you like it? I'm glad. I have hung no pictures. Daren't trust my own taste there. Also, I felt that I must leave you to choose your own books—or perhaps you would put china in that cupboard. I find there is a quantity of old blue Oriental stored away up in the garret. It might amuse you to select and arrange it."

"Oh, it will!" said Virgie in delight. "How pretty it all looks! I had no idea it could be so changed by just being treated right. Don't you want to do all the rest of the house?"

"I want *you* to do it," he answered.

"But I couldn't have thought of anything half as perfect as this. You have a genius for such things, evidently," was her admiring response.

He smiled, but let the compliment pass.

"I want you to lie down," he said, "for I know you must be tired to death. Let me show you how the end of your couch lets down. There! Are the pillows right?"

She ensconced herself in luxury.

"This is just like a dream," she said, "and if you will play to me, it will be still more so. I'll graciously allow you

to drink your coffee first," she added, as Hemming came in.

He stood before the hearth as he drank his coffee, looking down upon her and wondering how long he was going to be able to bear things. He must find a way out before his resolution quite failed.

With that disconcerting suddenness of his, he put down his cup and made a dash for the piano.

As he sat at the keyboard, he could see the top of her shining head just above the delicate-hued cushions that supported it. He saw Cosmo jump upon her lap, and he watched the moving to and fro of her hand as she gently stroked the cat. When he stopped playing, she begged him to go on. Then, after a while, the little hand ceased to move; the head was very still. At last he paused, let his hands fall, waited. No sound. He rose and limped across the soft carpet with noiseless feet. She was fast asleep.

Just for a moment he allowed himself to stand there looking upon her. His strong, somewhat harsh, features wore a look that transfigured them. Then he turned away with his mouth hard set. He had no right there, he bitterly reminded himself. The little buhl clock chimed nine in silver tones. He went softly to the door to prevent Grover from coming in and awakening her abruptly.

As he opened it, Hemming was approaching, with a telegram upon a tray. He took it, and, as he read, his eyes lit with a gleam of satisfaction.

Is Virginia with you? She left Worthing this morning.

Making a sign to Hemming not to disturb Mrs. Gaunt, he went over to the writing table and wrote:

Virginia came home to-day as previously arranged. Seems very well.

As Hemming took the message and departed, Grover came along the pas-

sage. Gaunt admitted her with a shy smile.

"I've played her to sleep," he said. "It seems a shame to disturb her."

Grover stooped over Virginia, then raised her eyes to the husband's face.

"Spite of that tiresome chill, she looks a deal stronger, doesn't she, sir?" she asked in hushed accents. "Don't you think she looks bonny, sir?"

"She's more lovely than ever, Grover," he replied, to her immense gratification.

"You might carry her upstairs, sir," she suggested. "You can do it easy, can't you?"

His face changed.

"No," he said decidedly. "It would startle her. You had better rouse her, please, if you want her to go with you now."

He walked away to the window and stood in the vacant space for which he had designed the statue of Love. Grover sent a keen, vexed glance after him.

"Silly thing!" was her disrespectful inward comment. "Why is he so plaguy shy of his own wife?"

"She'll have to get used to you, sir," she ventured after a pause, her heart in her mouth.

"It must be by degrees," he answered, speaking with his back toward her.

With a shrug of her shoulders, having ventured all and more than all she dared, she bent over Virginia and aroused her. The gray cat bounded to the floor, hunching his back and stretching his legs in the heat of the glowing logs.

"Oh!" cried Virgie, springing to her feet. "I went to sleep while Mr. Gaunt was playing!"

"The greatest tribute you could pay me, since I played a lullaby," remarked her husband, strolling up.

"It's time I was in bed, as I am so

ill-mannered as to fall asleep in the drawing-room," she laughed.

Next morning, though it was still cold, autumnal weather, the sun was shining.

Gaunt could hardly believe his eyes when Virgie ran into the dining room at the summons of the breakfast gong, looking as fresh and gay as the morning. The contrast between what was in his heart and his cool, undemonstrative greeting struck him as so grotesque that he almost laughed.

When they were seated, and she had poured out his coffee, they found it very difficult to know what to say. Virginia felt herself held back by what he had said the previous day. He had spoken as if he thought her stay at Omberleigh would be only temporary. She was eager to settle down, to know what she might do and plan, to begin some kind of a life together. In face of his attitude, she felt unable to make any advance, to offer any request or suggestion.

At last it occurred to her to ask what he had to do that day. He began to tell her that he was due in a certain part of the estate to— Then he pulled himself up, and said, with a covert eagerness:

"Unless you want me?"

She rested her elbows on the table and looked shyly at him.

"Of course I should like to have your society for a while," she answered. "I want to go round the place again. I was so stupid that first day. I felt so ill I hardly knew what I was doing. But now I can walk finely. If you have time—"

"But of course I have! Caunter is all right without me. I'm at your service. Do you remember one day when you were on the terrace and Mrs. Ferris was here? You said, or she said, that you would like to remodel the garden? Well, you know, this is

the time of year to do that. If you set to work now, it'll be all ready for next spring."

She looked at him earnestly.

"Please forgive me for asking," she said hesitatingly, "but yesterday I thought you said—you spoke as if—you didn't mean to keep me here. Did you mean that, or was it my fancy?"

He cleared his throat.

"Oh, that was your fancy. Certainly it was. I was only thinking that—of course everything is uncertain—human life, for instance. I'm a good deal older than you. If anything should—should happen to me, for example—this place would be yours. I have bequeathed it to you. So it is worth your while to make it what you like."

"If anything happened to you?" Obviously she was surprised, and also distressed. "Osbert! What is likely to happen to you?"

"Oh, nothing, of course," he replied hastily. "Only sometimes the unexpected may arrive, may it not?"

"Don't talk like that!" she cried impetuously. "It would be too dreadful if anything happened just at the beginning—just as we are making a start. Oh, do you remember——" She broke off short.

"I remember every single smallest thing you ever did or said," he threw out suddenly.

"Then you remember when you and I had lunch together at the Savoy. I bored you horribly by trying to make conversation when you didn't want to talk, and you told me that you knew all about me, as if you had known me all my life. I didn't think it was true," she laughed, playing with a fork and not daring to look at him. "Do you think it was?"

"It was as false, as detestable, as mistaken, and as insulting, as all the other things I said that day," was his energetic answer.

She looked up then, and smiled at

him. She was beginning to adjust her ideas.

"Then you're not thinking of sending me away?" she begged to know.

"Put that completely out of your head."

"If that is so, it will be the greatest fun to set to work upon the garden——" She paused, recollecting herself. "Will that interest you, too? I beg your pardon for asking, but I do know so ridiculously little about you; and, you see, your garden doesn't look as if you liked gardens, if you'll forgive me for saying it."

"I've been so lonely," he answered meekly. "There was nobody who cared whether the garden was nice or not. If you care—why, I shall take the most tremendous interest in it."

She was evidently quite satisfied.

"Let me see," she reflected. "How soon can we begin? I must go and see Mrs. Wells, and order dinner, and then I must send a line to Joey and ask her to come over to tea to-morrow——"

"You have a car of your own now," he broke in. "Don't be beholden to her any more than you wish."

"She was very kind," said Virgie, "and I know she would like to come, if you don't mind. I'm sorry for her, too."

"Why are you sorry for her?"

She looked up at him, with a half smile and an appeal for response.

"Her husband is such a—such a dreadful person, isn't he?"

Gaunt, for the first time in their mutual acquaintance, gave the sympathy, the understanding, for which she begged. He smiled, in the same way that she smiled, as if they were thoroughly in accord upon the point of Mr. Ferris.

"Poor old Joey!" he replied. "Your society must be a godsend to her. They were kind to me while you were

away. I went there several times. Joey let me read your letters to her."

This last was very tentatively said, with an apprehensive glance.

Virgie laughed, however.

"Such silly letters!" she remarked; then, laying aside her napkin and rising: "Then shall we go out to the garden in about an hour?"

He eagerly assented.

"I'll go down to the lodge and get Emerson to come along," he told her. "Then we can plan something."

They spent the entire morning in the garden, and at lunch time there was certainly no lack of conversation. In the absorbing topic of rock gardening, the idea of redecorating the house fell temporarily into the background.

They motored into Buxton that afternoon, and spent some time viewing the plants in a celebrated nursery garden. Gaunt had learned to drive the car during her absence, and was himself at the wheel, which fact lessened for him the hardship of the situation. He was occupied with his driving, and not drawn irresistibly by the magnet of her charm.

That evening, however, after dinner, when they were together in her beautiful, warm, white room, the tug of war began. He had to smother down the impulse to fight for his life—to make some kind of blundering bid for the love that he felt in his heart had been given to Rosenberg before he had ever seen her.

Virginia could not but suppose that his coldness, his complete aloofness, his apparent rejection of all her attempts at intimacy, arose from sheer shyness. She believed that some things are better and more easily expressed without words. Thus, that evening, when he was at the piano, playing out his heart-ache in soft, sad chords, in passionate, rapid movements, she came and stood behind him—close behind him.

This was hard, but he bore it. Man-

fully he went on playing for a while, but the influence of her presence, the emanation of her personality, checked his fingers. He stumbled, missed a note, dropped his hands, sat silent.

"It's cold so far from the fire," said she softly. "I've been making you play till your fingers are frozen." With which, she took them in her velvet clasp.

This was too much. He drew his hand from her touch with a sensation as if he were tearing it from a trap, lacerating it in the attempt. He sprang from his seat.

"Jove! I've just thought of something I must tell Hemming," he muttered hurriedly, and, pushing past her, left the room by way of the door into his own den.

Virginia stood amazed, confused, and somewhat uncomfortable. This, her first advance, must certainly be her only one. She went and sat on the hearthrug, gazing into the fire and puzzling. Suddenly a clear light shone upon the darkness of her musing.

But of course! Gaunt had not married her for love, but in pursuance of some half-crazed scheme of vengeance. He had thought it his duty to reform a heartless, selfish coquette. Now that he had found her to be very unlike his preconceived idea of her, what did he, what could he, want with her?

Why had she not sooner perceived this obvious truth? Color flooded her; she blushed hotly. His plans had proved abortive, and he found himself saddled with a young woman with whose company he would no doubt gladly dispense.

He was apparently ready to continue their present semidetached existence, so long as she made no attempt to force the barriers of his confidence or intimacy. She remembered, on reflection, that he had made no appeal to her, that he had confessed nothing. He had not even asked for forgiveness.

He had merely owned himself mistaken in his estimate of her. Since the outburst, so unlike him, that had, as it seemed, been shaken out of him at the unexpected sight of her, he had stood on guard all the time. She had really been very slow and stupid, or she would have seen long ago how embarrassing her presence must be unless she grasped the terms of their mutual relation.

Her lips curved into an involuntary smile as she recalled her well-meant attempt at a kindness he did not want. She bit her lip as she gazed into the fire.

"We-e-ell," she said aloud, with a little grimace, "I've been slow at picking up my cue, but I think I've got it now."

Almost as she spoke, Gaunt reëntered, and Grim, the collie, slunk in at his heels.

"I'm most awfully sorry for bolting like that, but it was important," he said, in tones of would-be friendly frankness.

With that, he turned to shut the dog out.

"Oh, let her come in, poor old girl! What has she done to be shut out?" cried Virgie, sitting on her heels upon the floor.

"I—I don't think your cats like her," he replied, hesitating.

"Well, I never! They'll have to like her! If they're to live in the same house, they must be friends," was the quick retort. "Grim, Grim, poor old girl, come here, then!"

Grim, more perceptive than her master, was quick to sense the invitation in the sweet voice, and came bounding into the circle of firelight. Damian sat up and spat, his back an arch, his tail a column. Virgie flung her arms round Grim's handsome neck and hugged her.

"Don't you take a bit of notice of that cheeky kitten, my dear! If he doesn't like you, he can lump you!

This was your house, long before he was born or thought of," she said, petting the collie till her tail thumped the floor with ecstasy.

"Osbert," said Virgie calmly, "there's a sheepskin mat out in the hall that would just do for her beside the fire here in the corner. If that is her place, the cats will very soon recognize it. Will you go and fetch it in for me, please?"

"But"—he paused—"this is your room, isn't it? And Grim's a big dog. Her place is in my den."

"Oh, she'll very soon find out where the warmest corner is, won't you, girl?" laughed Virgie. "Even if you won't come into my room, I'll warrant she will! Unless"—with a daring glance—"you mean us to have separate establishments, even to the dogs and cats?"

He began to speak, halted, then said quietly enough:

"I want you to have things as you like. I think you know that, really."

"Then this poor old thing shall come in just whenever she wants to," said Virgie, holding the golden muzzle in her hand and kissing the white star upon the dog's forehead.

Gaunt, watching, made a note of the exact spot.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"You're not the sort to bet on, Percy," remarked Joey Ferris. "What have you been filling me up with? You came home here, saying you could put me wise about the Gaunt marriage and that the whole thing was going phut and she wasn't coming back to him—"

"Well?"

"Well, you're off the rails this time, old man. She came home on Wednesday, and this morning I had a note from her to say she would call for me in the car this afternoon and take me over to Omberleigh to tea."

"Jove, though!" Ferris stood stock-still in his astonishment. "You're kidding, Joey?"

"Wish I may die," was the chaste rejoinder.

Ferris turned things rapidly over in his mind.

"Did you go?" he asked at length.

"Go? I should think so! She's as well as ever she was in her life—laughing and talking, as different from the timid, little, crushed thing she was as you are different from Gaunt. While she was away, he's had her sitting room all done up for her, and, my word, he has done it in style! You never saw anything so classy. It's like the little boudoir at the Chase. And she says he never bought a thing except the carpet and curtains—the furniture and china were all in the house, put away, and they've got enough left to furnish the dining room as well. My, it'll be a nice place by the time she's done with it!"

"Joey, I give you my word that on Saturday she was in bed, delirious, and her mother sat up all night with her."

"That might be. Look how Bill's temperature runs up if he gets a bit of a chill! She was all right by Wednesday, and now she's as fit as a fiddle. Seems so keen about things, too. Got a great idea of going over the mine. I thought we might have 'em both to lunch next week, and take them round after."

"Good idea. But have you forgotten that Rosenberg will be staying here?"

"Not me. That doesn't make a bit of difference. She was talking about him as easily as you might talk about me. Tell you what, Percy, you've got the wrong sow by the ear this time. She's still water, is that little lady."

"Huh? You don't mean she's not straight?"

"Not much! She's the straightest

goer I ever came across. But she doesn't wear her heart on her sleeve."

"I don't know where she keeps it, then," said Percy, with a grin. "You don't suppose old Gaunt's got it, do you?"

"Couldn't tell you that. But one thing I can say for certain—it doesn't belong to young Rosenberg."

"Are you sure, Joey?"

"Yes," said she simply, and without slang.

"Then I'm bothered!"

"I can go pretty near the truth of it, I expect," said Joey. "Rosenberg tried to make mischief, and it hasn't come off."

"He told me Gaunt was cruel to her—actually tortured her," said Percy in a lowered voice. "Said she let it out in her delirium."

"Go and tell that to the next one!" scorned his wife. "If it's true, then being tortured agrees with her."

"You can't deny she was very ill when she first came here."

"Yes, but that was none of Gaunt's doing. That was because she had been starving herself and doing all the housework for the better part of two years."

"Well, I'll have to try and explain matters to Rosenberg when he comes next week," said Percy, quite meek and crestfallen.

Meanwhile, at Omberleigh, since the moment when Virgie had grasped the situation, things had been going on fairly well. By degrees, a footing of friendly acquaintanceship had been established, which was sustained without difficulty on the lady's part.

The gentleman, however, was less satisfied. He went about each day with the knowledge that, if he were not quick about accomplishing some sort of suicide that should be obviously accidental, his own control might fail him at any moment, and the present state

of tantalizing half and half be impossible to maintain.

Yet for a strong, energetic, experienced man, in his own county, to kill himself in such a manner that nobody should suspect him of having done so was far harder than he had foreseen. He turned over plan after plan in his mind, only to reject them all. He began to despair of ever accomplishing his purpose convincingly, as long as he stayed in England. The idea of taking Virginia to Switzerland suggested itself. There it would be comparatively simple. He would only have to leave her in a comfortable hotel, taking care that she had plenty of money, and go rambling on a mountainside alone, hurling himself down any precipice that looked sufficiently steep to make a thorough job of it.

Against this was the fact that it was growing late in the season for Switzerland, and most of the mountain hotels would be closed. The mere circumstance of his selecting Switzerland for a late-autumn holiday might look suspicious in the light of after events.

To do the thing intentionally, which was by far the easiest plan, was, from his point of view, out of the question, because of the implied slur upon his widow.

If a newly married man commits suicide, he may leave a hundred explanations, assuring his wife of his happiness with her, but they will impose upon nobody. Gaunt was determined not to expose his beloved to the evil tongues of rumor, yet he felt that he must shortly take some definite action or go mad.

In this frame of mind, he heard with interest that Gerald was coming to stay at Perley Hatch. So far, he had had no chance to gather anything of Virginia's feeling for Gerald. Two or three times he had tried to ask, but voice and courage had failed him. In his male density, he imagined that he

would not be able to see the two together without coming to a conclusion. He urged the acceptance of Joey's invitation. Virginia's health, since her return, had given no cause for anxiety, and she was eager to explore the cave.

It was in a mood of great depression that he set out with her upon the day fixed. He was uncertain of everything—of her feeling, of his own intentions, of Gerald's worth, even, of late, of his own courage. The existing state of things, difficult though it might be, was perilously sweet. There were hours when he told himself that he was an utter fool, and that his present attitude was a quixotry that bordered upon madness. Yet there seemed no way to end it. Every day of the footing upon which he and his wife now stood made it more irrelevant, as it were, for him to turn from lukewarm companion into ardent lover. And when he tried to face what would be his state of mind if she rejected him, as she might—or, worse still, if, as was more likely, she submitted to his love without returning it—he felt that he simply did not dare risk it.

Virginia was quick to note his depression. The variability of his spirits nowadays was more noticeable than he supposed. Sometimes her light-hearted nonsense would beguile him into something like hilarity, but these moments were usually, as she was well aware, followed by a corresponding withdrawal. She built all her hopes upon them, however, for it seemed to her that, in the period of reaction, he never slipped back quite so far into the realms of aloofness. It was an approach, though a very gradual one. As in a rising tide, each wave fell back, but all the same—the flood mounted.

She chatted gayly as she sat beside him in the car, talking of the matters that engrossed her—the garden and the house. He could not perceive that she

manifested the least consciousness of being on the way to meet her lover.

When they walked together into Joey's drawing-room, he was not so certain. Rosenberg, in spite of his self-command, betrayed a very obvious embarrassment. If her feeling were doubtful, his was not. Her mere presence in the room seemed to set him aquiver.

Gaunt shook hands with him more easily, less grudgingly, than on the former occasion of their meeting. This surprised Gerald somewhat. He had gone, from that meeting, straight to the address given him by Joey, had seen Virginia, had established an intimate footing of friendship, had taken her about in his car, had done other things that a newly made husband would be most apt to resent. Yet Gaunt's greeting was almost kindly.

This disturbed Gerald. There must be one of two reasons for it—either he was so sure of his wife that he could afford to ignore other men, or he knew more than he pretended to and was on the watch—eager to take his adversary off guard.

These thoughts produced considerable constraint in the young man's manner to Virgie, whose gentle sweetness was much the same as usual.

"You made a surprisingly quick convalescence," he remarked, thinking how pretty she was in her tailor suit of silvery corduroy and soft hat of the same material.

"Yes," she said. "I was sure you would be pleased to know that I was not nearly so ill as mamma thought me. She was alarmed because I was feverish, but it soon went off. I'm quite splendidly well now. This air suits me—doesn't it, Osbert?"

"It really seems to," he replied, ready to worship her for calling him so naturally into the conversation. "Motoring, too, agrees with you. I feel very grateful to you, Rosenberg,

for giving her some runs down in Sussex, though I wish you could have avoided the drenching."

The composed voice and words disconcerted Gerald for a moment, but he took up his cue almost at once.

"Gaunt, you're a good sort," he replied gratefully. "I've been afraid to look you in the face since making such an utter ass of myself. I'm glad to take this chance of apologizing. But I don't feel quite so repentant as I did, now that I see Mrs. Gaunt looking so well and blooming."

Joey chimed in, vowing that the Derbyshire air was doing wonders for Virgie.

"If we could get some fine weather, Osbert ought to run you around the peak," said Virgie to Gerald. "Our car is a beauty, and, while I was away, Osbert learned to 'chauff,' and he 'chauffs' ever so nicely, much better than poor dear Ransom, who, I suppose, is a bit old to learn. Ransom is quite a safe driver, but he gives you sudden bumps—you know what I mean—putting the brake on suddenly. Now, when Osbert is driving, I never know there is a brake, nor when he changes his speed."

Gerald was puzzled. If this were acting, it was jolly good. Surely this girl could not be afraid of her husband. He looked from one to the other, completely mystified.

Lunch was quite a hilarious meal. Tom and Bill were both present, and Virgie sat between them by special request. She confided various episodes from the career of Little Runt to their willing ears, and they behaved so well as to surprise their parents.

After lunch, while the men stood about smoking cigarettes before starting, the baby was brought down, and Joey and Virgie, kneeling on the drawing-room carpet, tried to inveigle her into making a tottering step alone, from one to the other. It was amusing to

watch her little, plump body balanced upon its unsteady supports, her dimpled arms outspread, her baby lips parted in glee, showing the two rows of tiny pearls between. To and fro, to and fro, she wavered, with protecting arms on either hand, not touching, but guarding. Then at last, with a shriek of ecstasy at her own boldness, she ran forward—one step—two—and fell, a triumphant, huddled sweetness, right upon Virgie's breast.

The girl clasped the rosy thing in her hugging arms.

"Oh, Babs, when you are a big, grown-up girl," said she, "some day I'll remind you that you took your first step to me!"

Gaunt stood near the window, rigid, fascinated, his whole being melted into a tenderness so poignant as to be half painful. How many sources of happiness, simple and everyday, were in the world! How barren and dry and selfish his own life had been! In his moment of insight, he saw that even Joey Ferris, tied to Percy, might have her moments of utter beatification, since he had made her the mother of this child.

He took a new resolve. When they got home that evening, he would have it out with Virginia—he would give her her choice. He would persuade her to tell him frankly if all her heart was Gerald's. If it were not——

TO BE CONTINUED.

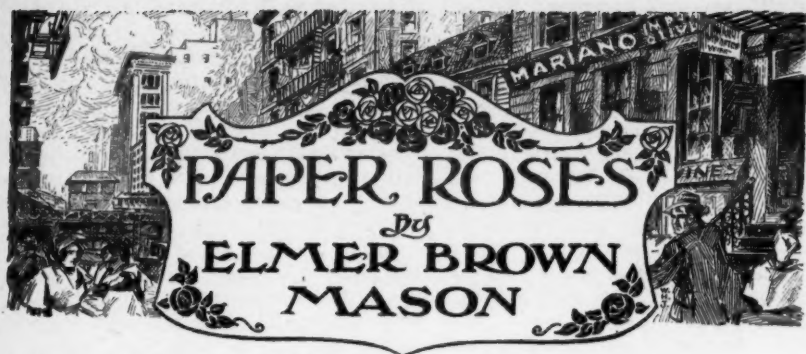


MEZZANINE

I LIKE you, miss, I like you much,
As you stroll down the Avenue.
I like the Frenchy little touch;
I like your bows and frills and such;
I like your hair of raven hue;
I like your cunning little hat—
The cutest I have ever seen;
I like your prim, precise cravat;
But most I like your skirtlet that
Just reaches to the mezzanine.

I like your independent air,
As you stroll down the Avenue.
I like your eyes—a saucy pair;
I like your ways, for they declare
You cannot be a parvenu;
I like the dainty way you flirt;
I like your gay and pleasant mien;
But most of all, I like your skirt,
Your daring, man-ensnaring skirt,
Your flaring, ankle-baring skirt,
That comes just to the mezzanine.

GEORGETTE.



SOONER or later, all Sullivan Street brought its troubles, sentimental or otherwise, to Madame Guyot. When these troubles were whispered over the yard-long counter of her tiny shop, she gave her advice in a series of shrieks that all the street might hear. Were they matters of grave import, however, the sufferer was led up many flights of stairs to the pepper-box top of the tenement, where she dwelt with her husband, the German, Hans Baeder. (Madame Guyot, her maiden name, had evolved into a title.) There, while Canary Fritz led the orchestra of his saffron wives and children in joyous song, sympathy was poured like balm on the aching heart, or shrewd advice guided the troubled son of Italy through the intricate business mazes of a new land.

This time, however, Madame Guyot was not only perplexed, but very much troubled. Should Rosa Celli marry Angelo O'Brien Guidi, the merchant of paper flowers, for whom she worked, or should she hearken to the suit of Tomaso Solario, the rich saloon keeper? It was an absorbing problem to Marie Guyot, and such a one as her heart loved; but she feared unhappiness for at least one of the triangle, possibly all—and all were her friends and had consulted her.

First had come Angelo O'Brien Guidi—the O'Brien a harmless interjection by way of Americanizing his name—small, round, neat, the laughter in his eyes lying above and concealing the anxiety for a struggling business that filled their depths. His was the secret ambition to own a little plot of land in the suburbs, and a prim white house, overrun with bambini, and for this he toiled and moiled over the manufacture and placing of his gaudy paper flowers, the contract from the great Fifth Avenue shop that was to make him rich always just eluding him.

Poor as he was, had he the right to ask the most beautiful woman in the world, a saint, to be his wife, Madame Guyot had repeated, in a shrieking crescendo. Indeed yes! A hundred times yes! A million times yes! The more beautiful and the more saintly, the more yes, yes, yes! No women needed husbands so much as beauties and saints! As for poverty—she had snapped her long fingers, and her ample bosom had heaved tumultuously—didn't Rosa make the best of the flowers he sold?

The street—all of it had heard—had given that cross between a grunt and a sigh by means of which crowds signify their approval, and Angelo O'Brien Guidi had fled, outwardly

overcome with embarrassment, but secretly rejoiced.

As evening had come, Tomaso Solario had appeared, very imposing in a scarlet waistcoat with pearl buttons, a purple tie, and the tanniest of tan shoes. He had sat down deliberately beside Madame Guyot on the tenement steps and whispered at length in her ear, though she had loudly called on all the street to witness that attentions from such a bird of paradise would ruin her reputation, that her Hans must be blind, blind!

After the man of wealth had had his say, with a long breath she had gathered herself together and treated the delighted listeners to a splendid outburst.

Was Rosa the kind of a woman with whom a rich man might be happy? That was for the rich man to decide. Tastes differed. His might run, perhaps, to a black woman or one with a wooden leg. Of course, rich men might choose where they willed—like flies! Would she do him credit? There could be no better way of increasing custom than having her stand behind the bar. Why hadn't he asked if she would be extravagant, since she had always been poor? Or if her children would be born in red vests, as well as with silver spoons between their proud gums? Why, why, why, though, of course, that had nothing to do with it—her voice had risen to a shriek above the silence of the tensely listening street—why, why, yes, why had he not asked if she could learn to love him, *la pauvre chérie*, or said that he loved her?

Tomaso, who had not said one-tenth of what had been attributed to him, had fled in rage and dismay, his complexion an intermediate shade between purple tie and scarlet waistcoat. The street had laughed, with that touched, uncertain hilarity that follows a slap on the back and an uproarious "Splendid, splendid, old man!" Madame Guyot

had turned to her husband and kissed him with such fury and viciousness that his Teuton imperturbability had been startled into returning the caress.

It had been the next morning, however, before the object of these consultations had slipped quietly into the tiny shop beneath the strings of red pepper and garlic, and whispered over the little counter.

In the dim light, Rosa Celli had shone like some real dusky white rose. An unheard-of thing among the daughters of southern Italy, though well over thirty, she still held all her beauty, thanks to the mountainous north whence she came, and which had given her a skin smooth and white as virgin snow, save where the good red blood beneath had kissed a rose on either cheek. Her soft hair was gray, nearly white. Beneath her level brows, her limpid brown eyes—not stars, but twin flowers—were clear as those of a babe, while her full lips were as sweet as a dream of motherhood.

The street had been treated to no résumé of Rosa Celli's heart throbs. At the very first faltering words, a solemn-eyed bambini and Mimi Jaune, the cat, had been left in sole charge of the shop, while the girl had been whisked up the many stairs to the pepper-box top of the tenement, the shrine where dwelt, in loving harmony, Hans Baeder, his wife, and Canary Fritz.

It was only after Rosa had found relief in tears, and a resting place in the older woman's strong arms, that the words had really come, and she had confessed her tragedy. Rosa loved the little merchant of artificial flowers for whom she twisted the paper imitations of her own name; loved him for the stanch bravery with which he piloted his frail business bark; loved him for the laughter in his eyes that concealed the anxiety beneath; for his kindness, for the honesty with which he paid his employees to the last penny, though he himself

all but starved; loved him even for his neat, round body; but, most of all, loved him for the tenderness of his unuttered love for her.

She had told of the many times when a great Fifth Avenue contract had seemed certain, of the heart-rending disappointments at the very last moment, then of the brave beginning anew. There had been happiness in it all, however, the kind of happiness that comes to a woman only in helping the man she loves. Gradually, through small sales, the business had acquired a treasured surplus, and, though no word had been said between them, they both had dared to dream of a glorious future based on a foundation of paper roses. Rosa was a wonderful creator of flowers, and could have commanded twice her present wages elsewhere, but she naturally preferred to use her deft fingers in the service of love, twining her dreams among the paper petals.

Then had come, from far-away Piedmont, the letter that had put an end to all dreams; a letter pitiful in its ignorance and selfishness, over which Madame Guyot gritted her strong white teeth, but that poor Rosa had no thought but to accept. It read, in the neat script and flowing Italian of the parish priest:

MY DEAR ELDEST SISTER: God has thought best to take away our sister and her husband because of excess in new wine, and I have learned resignation through the church. Her seventh is just three, and I have nothing. The saints in their mercy have been good to me, however, and I am to marry Padrone Gratiano, who owns all the vineyards above the town, as you well know. He is not generous with his money, but promises I shall not have to work in the vines if I bear him children.

Our sister's children he does not want, but has agreed to pay their way to America. I send them to you because I know you are single, now too old to marry, and must be very rich from the wages of which you wrote. You can, therefore, take good care of them. Your only cousin's wife will bring them on the ship. I want them to wear silk

dress and be taught to sing, so they may find rich husbands.

For a wedding present you may send me American slippers, like you did before—only let these be of white satin—and also some money from your plenty.

God will reward you, and don't forget the slippers. Your sister,
LUCETTA.

Remarkable as was this document, it did not exaggerate the Italian peasant's conception of the new land, fostered as that was by the glowing circulars and reports of wages spread broadcast by the emigrant steamship companies. And Rosa had not the slightest intention of shirking the responsibility of this family that was being thrust upon her, even though it meant the end of all her dreams. Of course, a mating with the poor merchant of paper flowers was out of the question; even the higher wages she could secure from another employer could not provide for such a brood. The only solution seemed to lie in marriage with the rich saloon-keeper suitor, who, whatever his faults might be, was well known for his generosity. Even Madame Guyot had been forced to advise this—money, among the very poor, is a god that demands every sacrifice—but she had added the world-old counsel of women to women—to wait—and had urged, in addition, no word of the children's coming to either of the lovers, and no change in Rosa's life until their actual arrival.

Angelo O'Brien Guidi's workrooms were in the loft of a building on West Broadway, just below Bleeker. There, before an open window, Rosa worked from early morning until late into the night. All day long came the roar of traffic from the street, mingled with the rush of the elevated trains not twenty feet from her window, and, in the evening, the joyous voices of the bambini mingling with the shrill gossip of their mothers; the sea of sound broken at regular intervals by the crash of the signal switch as the train

turned from Third Street into West Broadway, the crunch of its stop at Bleecker Street, and then the breathless rush of the lighted cars through the darkness.

Her deft fingers never idle, Rosa clipped, with her curiously shaped scissors, tiny forget-me-nots from blue paper, and pasted them on fragile green stems; fashioned yellow jonquils from crinkly yellow tissue; or glued white petals to the golden hearts of daisies. But mostly she made roses—roses from every shade of filmy paper, bridal white to glowing crimson, sentient save for lack of perfume alone.

She had been very, very happy in the sunny loft, and even during the time of waiting her sevenfold fate, this happiness still lingered. Several small contracts had materialized, mostly for roses, so Angelo's surplus was still growing slowly, while his adoration for the dusky rose who gave so generously of her labors increased beyond measure. To forbid entirely his love was beyond Rosa's power, and, indeed, she held it away only with that trembling wistfulness that is in itself a yielding. Neither could she bring herself to encourage her rich admirer, though he ardently pressed his suit. It would be time enough when she was forced to accept his attentions. Meanwhile, though she was quite ignorant of it, her very coldness made her infinitely more desirable to him.

A contract so splendid loomed on the horizon, so profitable in its terms, that Angelo and Rosa did not even dare think of the possibility of winning it. Nevertheless, one of Rosa's flowers was sent in as a sample, and though it was not accepted, the big Fifth Avenue firm was sufficiently impressed to hold up the placing of the order and ask Angelo to try again.

Followed a period of agonized exasperation. Rose after rose, from every color and shade of paper, was

submitted, only to just fall short of the requirements. Something new was wanted, something variegated, quite outside the usual run. The conventional variegated paper of the trade was tried, but its symmetrical designs really gave a less perfect flower than the solid colors. Of course, it would have been possible to make a rose from white paper and shade it by hand. Always, however, it had to be borne in mind that the roses must be made in quantity, and therefore quickly, in order to show a profit on even this liberal contract. There were days when Rosa's lips were salty with tears from morning till night.

Another letter came from Italy, asking for money for a wedding gown and warning Rosa of the impending departure of the children, with the date of their arrival. This was also carried to Madame Guyot, who relieved her feelings by a furious tirade against all women. Her good sense, nevertheless, advised the only solution, the acceptance of the rich lover.

It was only the day before the steamer was to dock that Rosa yielded her promise to him. Even then she made no mention of the family she was about to acquire—she did not quite dare—but asked him and Madame Guyot to meet a boat with her, in the morning, on which she expected relatives.

That night—for the last time, as she truly believed—she labored feverishly in the flower-strewn loft, in a final effort to evolve a rose that would win the coveted contract. While the street outside hummed with the life of the night, or echoed the rumble of the elevated, she spread the brilliantly colored tissue sheets before her and tried combination after combination, her lover silently working by her side.

The voices gradually died, and silence settled on West Broadway, save for the rattle of trains at longer and longer intervals, the warning crash of the signal on the turn above Bleecker

Street sounding like the far-away burst of a mighty wave on a rocky shore. Flower after flower, created and found wanting, lay in heaps about Rosa. Her latest confection, a vivid crimson rose, between her fingers, she raised her weary eyes and met those of her lover. What she saw there—timid adoration, love unutterable, a heart-rending, dumb appeal—brought the tears welling up in her eyes, until they overflowed. She shielded her face with the rose, and the paper flower grew wet with this dew of unhappiness, soaked with the essence of love.

Agonized, but not daring to touch her, Angelo stretched out two plump, trembling, suppliant hands.

"Littlest brown-eyed one," he implored, "not tears, not tears!"

Barriers of restraint, worldly resolution, sense of duty itself, all went down before a mighty flood of love. With a single movement, she was in his arms, sobbing out her whole heart: "I can't marry you and I love you so! I can't marry you and I love you so!" till the words were crushed, stifled, and finally mercifully forgotten, against his lips.

They drew apart at last, though their hands still clung, the crimson rose clasped between them. But the crimson rose was no longer all crimson, not the same flower! Where a tear had fallen, the color had spread and shaded, until the pure white light of early morning seemed blending and breaking through the glory of the rising sun. Transmuted from a tawdry paper counterpart, it glowed a wonderful living flower.

Rapt, they gazed upon it, and then Rosa, hysterical between belief and doubt, bent over a sheet of the crimson paper and managed to squeeze a single drop of moisture from her lovely brown eyes. Breathless, they watched it slowly spread in tiny tendrils, and then fade and run the brilliant colored surface.

"But must the beauty of our roses come only through tears?" cried Angelo, and, holding each other tight, they laughed with love, joy, and wonderment. Quickly, the reason dawned on both of them. Impervious to liquids, the colors gave way and were transformed by the slightest trace of salt. They tried a weak solution of it in water, and, beneath the touch of Rosa's wet finger tips, the paper petals paled, grew real, blossomed into life.

It would be untrue to say that Rosa's intention of carrying out her sacrifice by marrying the rich saloon keeper remained unshaken. The very best she could bring herself to do was to dream no dreams. It was, then, with fear and a heavy heart that she hurried, with Madame Guyot and Tomaso Solario, to the Battery, and waited, at the entrance of the immigrant shed, the exodus of the brood that had adopted her as provider. Madame Guyot was silent, save when bitterly sarcastic. Tomaso, resplendent in silk hat, cream-colored tie, and patent-leather boots with cloth tops, was all triumph. He knew nothing of what Rosa expected, understood only that relatives from Italy were to be met, and was far too pleased with his conquest to ask questions.

From the stream of immigrants flowing uncertainly into the street, a peasant woman, a child in her arms, detached herself and rushed to Rosa. A brief note explained the nonarrival of the other children:

The Padrone Gratiano, my husband, can use the other six in his vineyards, so I send only the youngest, Rosalita. The slippers came, but no money. Your sister,

LUCETTA.

With a joyous cry, that was, in reality, a pæan of relief, Rosa gathered the child into her arms and smothered it with kisses. Tomaso Solario stood with a dumfounded stare on his face, which quickly changed to an ugly glower.

"Yours?" he asked hoarsely.

"Yes, mine, mine, that I love!" answered Rosa, heedless of how her words might be interpreted. "Mine, mine, to cherish forever! Bless the father that begot her!"

"And you call yourself signorina!" sneered the man, between clenched teeth.

Horrified, Rosa opened her mouth to explain, and then shut it again, as Madame Guyot's heel ground into her instep.

"Has a woman no right to a child?" shrieked Madame Guyot. "What were women made for, you male peacock?"

"But it is not mine——" began Tomaso.

"Not yours, ruiner of women, curse of our sex, no, not yours!" She shook her fist beneath his nose, then whirled to the girl. "Fly, my child, before he strikes you and slays the innocent babe!"

While Madame Guyot was explaining to Tomaso—and every one else within two blocks—the meaning of the child's arrival, interlarded with spicy comments on the miserable man's clothes, morals, and business, Rosa was fleeing up the elevated stairs, the little girl in her arms and an agony of fear in her heart. What if her real lover should misunderstand, should cast her

off? From the Bleecker Street station she turned north on West Broadway and, rushing up the stairs, burst into the flower loft.

"She's mine! I'll never give her up!" beseechingly gasped Rosa, holding the child out to Angelo.

The little man grew pale, but the love in his eyes never faltered.

"Since I worship the rose, I can but love the bud," he said bravely.

With the child, crowing and delighted, inextricably mixed in their laps, Rosa poured out her heart, told him her troubles from the beginning; and together, between kisses, they wept and laughed.

"*La Rosa Lachrimosa*" they called the flower that brought them orders beyond their wildest dreams. Winter was well under way before these were even partially filled and paid for, and then Rosa and Angelo were married. The only real flowers at the wedding were in the form of a huge and expensive heart, done in lilies of the valley. It was more suggestive of a funeral than of nuptial rites, however, and was an offering from Tomaso Solario, the wealthy saloon keeper. But though there was a dearth of floral offerings inside the loft, where the ceremony took place, the snow on the window sills outside was stuck full of paper roses.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF PAIN

SUPPOSING Pain herself were stricken dead
And Time crept on without annoy,
Then Life would lack the salt upon his bread,
And Joy would haply die of joy.

SHANE LESLIE.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS BY ALAN DALE

HAVE you ever written a play? Do not blush and look self-conscious and stammer, as if this abrupt query hurt you. Do not even trouble to answer the question, for I know the answer. You wrote a play, and you sent it to Mr. Belasco, and he told you that while it was perfectly wonderful, most admirably written, full of human interest, intensely dramatic, and overwhelmingly novel, he regretted that, owing to previous engagements, he was unable to accept your kind invitation—to produce it. It is upstairs in your trunk—don't deny it—and you wonder why managers are so blind, or at least myopic. Such outrageously impossible plays are framed for the public eye, you say, and yet yours lies fallow in the attic. And you will write more, because you have acquired the dreadful habit. One hears of drug cures, but never of play cures, and it is a wonder to me. Really I believe that with proper treatment the unproduced playwright could be rehabilitated, like the morphine fiend or the alcohol victim.

Let me ask you one leading question: Has your play a "punch"? If it does not possess a punch—which is not nearly as spiteful as it sounds—then it is doomed to perpetual attic, even if it be literary, dramatic, human, artistic, and optimistic. What is a punch? Just wait a minute, and I'll look it up for you. Just one moment—here it is:

"A blow, as with the fist, or a thrust or nudge, as with the elbow or knee; as a *punch* in the eye." That is it. Something in your play must hit the manager in the eye and blind him to its imperfections. Say that your play has four acts—always try to avoid five. Three of its acts should preferably be utter drivel, just as dull and foolish as you can possibly make them; but the fourth must have the "punch in the eye." It is the punch in the eye that makes one "see stars." Otherwise one might never "see" them. The punch makes plays and makes stars.

It is a penny-in-the-slot arrangement. The plays work when you drop in a punch. With the punch, you see managers, you see stars, and you see a delighted public. It is automatic, but extremely interesting. It is the theatrical routine. Real life, of course, has no punch at all—unless you happen to be a dramatic critic—but the stage is not real life, and no longer pretends to be real life. It is theater life, which is something completely different.

Take, for example, the play by Eugene Walter called "Just a Woman," at the Forty-eighth Street Theater, and it will illustrate exactly what I mean. Mr. Walter is a great student of the art of punch, which critics used to call "the playwright's cunning" or "keen dramatic intuition" until the monosyllable became so popular. Note the superb conceit of this playwright—this dexter-

ous afterthought—in programming his heroine as “The Woman” and his hero as “The Man,” just as if they were types of race instead of types of melodrama. And, while the heroine is “The Woman,” the naughty person is “The Lady,” which I thought was extremely subtle—perhaps the only subtle feature of the piece.

In “Just a Woman,” you are supposed to sympathize acutely with the heroine—a very easy task, for you are accustomed to sympathizing with stage heroines. They are there to be sympathized with. Just as an audience knows that it is expected to laugh by the intonation of the comedian’s voice—no matter what piffle he utters—so an audience knows that it is expected to sympathize by the intonation of the heroine’s voice. She may not suffer at all in the first act, but there is something in the quality of her tones that indicates her thorough intention of suffering anon. So you hold your sympathy in delicate abeyance.

Mr. Walter’s heroine is first perceived in a workingman’s boarding house in the hills near Pittsburgh. She is very happy. She loves The Man fondly, foolishly, faithfully, but rather tiresomely. Though happy, you know that something dreadful will happen to her, because she talks so furtively, as it were. That is one of the peculiarities of the stage. Even if nothing happens to the heroine for ten years, she indicates the coming disaster persistently through those years. It is just as if she said:

“Of course I’ve rehearsed the piece, and I know how wretched I shall be. You don’t know, because you haven’t rehearsed the piece. So don’t blame me for what I *know*.”

It is a very dreary act; and you, with your little play that Belasco loved, but wouldn’t produce, upstairs in the attic, wonder why it was staged. And so beautifully staged, too! You see fur-

naces puffing out *real* smoke—*real* smoke, you know, that you adore in the theater and loathe at home—and you note the wonderful perspective of the hills. Nothing at all happens in this act, but you can be quite sure that a play without a punch would never have been so extravagantly “set.” The mere fact that *real* smoke is puffing from the Pittsburgh furnaces is enough to inform the dramatically initiated that something will happen before going-home time occurs.

Six years later, The Man and The Woman are in very good circumstances. The scene is a “library” in his house. A library on the stage is a place where everything happens except books. In the library scene, the sympathy that you have held in abeyance may be used. The Man has tired of The Woman. She has failed to live up to his progressive life, as women have done in so many plays.

Why should you sympathize with a woman who is so lacking in alertness and spirit that she cannot keep pace with her husband? To that I reply: Because the theater expects it of you. If you saw a man so hopelessly lethargic that he couldn’t live up to his own wife, you would say that he was a fool, deserving of nothing but contempt. Not so with a woman. If she prefers to sit in the kitchen and peel potatoes rather than to sit on gold chairs in “full evening dress,” you are expected to sympathize with the poor thing. She is so simple-minded! When a man is simple-minded, he is kicked around the block; but with a woman it is different. It is poetic!

Again you wonder why “Just a Woman” reached Forty-eighth Street. You do not know Mr. Walter as well as I do. You are unfamiliar with this punchist. Of course you are, or your plays would not be in the attic.

The play proceeds slowly—oh, so slowly! The playwright has become so

mixed up with his characters, which he calls The Woman, The Man, The Boy, The Lady, and so forth, that he is forced to give them names in parentheses, just as if they didn't matter very much. Then horrible complications set in—and none too soon, let me tell you. They set in late, just as you are beginning to think longingly of home and mother. The Man goes right—I mean wrong—and devotes himself to another. In plays of this sort, of course, there are never any extenuating circumstances for a man, though I should think there might be. Playwrights who are men love to foul their own nests—for the sake of royalties. I think it is a great pity. No woman would foul hers!

Everything leads up to divorce—a dreadfully trumped-up affair in which The Woman, who hated gold chairs and loved the dear old Pittsburgh boarding house where she ate stewed prunes instead of *vol-au-vent à la financière*—will be painted in the very blackest colors by professional perjurers. I have omitted to say that she has a child—one of those clean little dears so familiar to theatergoers. Heroines on the stage have children only for pathos—never for fun. They are born to be wept over in the “big” act. Then you see: “Scene—the courtroom of the Common Pleas.” And you know that the punch is imminent. It has been imminent many times this season in many courtrooms. Remember that a courtroom scene means punch! The divorce case is tried. The judge, the clerk of the court, the attorney of record, the junior counsel, are all there, and so are the “supers,” who in these courtroom scenes look so fearfully dragged in, at so much per night, poor things! The punch—the punch—the punch!

She is about to let everything go by default, to put in no answer, to give him his cherished divorce. Sweet mem-

ories of stewed prunes in the dear old Pittsburgh boarding house are all that she has, except her child. Just as everything is settled against her, she learns that the custody of the dear one will be his. There are moments of keen, adroit suspense. The punch is in the air to be sniffed and inhaled. The episode you have waited for is due. You have sat patiently through all this wearisomely conventional business, but you have not sat in vain. The climax bursts with shrapnellike ferocity. Up rises The Woman, her mind made up, the stewed prunes of earlier and brighter days all dried and withered.

She is guilty of all the infidelity with which they have charged her, she says. She is guilty of very much more than they have dared set forth. She is guilty of so much, in fact, that the custody of the child cannot be given to him, because—he—is—not—its—father!

There's the punch. And isn't it a punch, right in the eye? You don't reason about punches; you just “get” them. You might say, of course, that it is preposterous to believe that a perfectly innocent woman with a stewed-prune mind would brand herself as hopelessly dissolute before a whole courtroom full of men. But Walter put the punch in the slot, and the play moved. It was about time, too. The very dreariness of the early acts made you palpitate quite nicely when the punch came, and next day you read that “Just a Woman” had “form, suspense, color, and a thrilling dramatic climax.” The punch in the eye made some critics see a star—Miss Josephine Victor. I was not among them. In my foolish way, I yearned for less vociferous expression, not only on the part of Miss Victor, but on the part of the others.

However, it would be ridiculous to say that “Just a Woman” did not fulfill its mission. It did. It had the punch!

So had Mr. Michael L. Landman's play, "The Pride of Race," at the Maxine Elliott Theater. Circulars were distributed on the subject of this play, which was tried out of town before it reached New York. The Syracuse *Herald* said: "There are no less than seven situations in the play, every one of which gives the audience as much thrill as it is accustomed to get from the 'big scene' in an ordinary play." I love Syracuse. It is so pretty. It was a great joy to know what its critic said, and of course its verdict influenced us all tremendously. The Buffalo *News* said it was a "gripping drama." Even Rochester was quoted. The voices of these artistic centers were most grateful and helpful.

The punch in "The Pride of Race" occurred in the third act. Mr. Landman, unlike Mr. Walter, is not a punchist. In his play, we didn't get it in the eye, as we sat in the theater, bored, but expectant. It was indicated several times, and if it hadn't materialized, we should have been dreadfully disappointed and even indignant. But it was a punch, just the same, and some of us resented it when we got it. I didn't; I disagree with those who say that certain things on the stage are unpleasant. Nothing is unpleasant, *if* it be well done. In "The Pride of Race," it was at least well done.

This time you were supposed to sympathize with both the man and the woman, otherwise Mr. Robert Hilliard would not have produced the play. You never "see stars" materialized by a punch in the eye unless you can give them your sympathy. This hero loved a beautiful girl; quite tediously at first. In fact, they put you in that condition of hopeless apathy that the play with a punch considers essential to the subsequent enjoyment of the punch. This hero is told that he has a "colored" strain in his make-up, and that there is just one chance in a million that it will

appear in his children. Therefore you are perfectly certain that he will have children. Without the colored strain in his make-up, he probably wouldn't, because it isn't at all stylish nowadays, and both he and the girl are awfully "good form."

You wade through a good deal of tiresome play, not particularly well written or artistic, until you come to the third act. This act includes among its scenes *Louise's* bedroom, and "among those present" are a nurse and a doctor. There is acute agony in the air. Again you inhale suspense and are quite aware that the punch is due. You hum to yourself: "I have waited for thy coming"—and wait. The hero, who cannot forget his colored strain even for a moment, though for a strong man he seems to have behaved like a very weak one, is "all wrought up." He is about to become a father, and the horrible possibilities are torture to him. What happens? The worst, of course. If this hero was blind to possibilities, the playwright wasn't. One chance in a million doesn't "faze" a playwright. He rushes blindly at it and captures it.

The child is born, and the doctor tells the sad tidings. It is black. For a time, you are inclined to believe that this is one of the plays that should have been produced under the benign auspices of some medical society; it is so obstetrical. Later, of course, the mother yearns to see her offspring, which has been carefully hidden from her, and finally resolves to do so at all costs. She leaps from the bed, dashes into the adjoining room, and discovers the truth. "A man of strong character, strong will, and strong passions"—I am quoting one of those after-effusions that invariably occur when a play seems to think that it needs excuse—"is put into the most terribly humiliating and trying position, where he sees the woman he loves more than life turn against him in agony of soul, and his most cherished

wish—the desire for children to bear his name and inherit his power—made impossible by a social imperfection in him for which he is in no way to blame.”

It is a continuation of the punch—which is the only thing that matters in this sort of drama. Yet the last act is supposed to “teach the moral.” The father and his dark son—I admit that I was deeply disappointed to find, at the end of the piece, that the son looked merely sun-kissed—are in Cuba together, and the lad has become a hard worker, a skilled laborer, and an ambitious youth. He says to his parent: “Are you proud of me?” And father replies: “More than that, boy—I love you.” Curtain. You overlook the tricky ending for the sake of the punch in the third act. Tricks, alas! are necessary. Could one have assimilated “The Pride of Race” without the inconclusive touch at the end? The fond mother is quite ignored after the punch. Nobody hears of her again. After having produced the “case,” she has nothing more to do with it.

So again I say: “Never forget your punch.” Go up to your attic and get your characters to do something outrageous, or at least “sensational,” in your “big” act. Then even Mr. Belasco will read you attentively. No matter what you say, or how you argue, the punch must be there, or you will be condemned to one of those “societies” that produce plays which nobody wants to see. Their theaters are usually on side streets downtown—most worthy neighborhoods, but so hard to get at that nobody gets at them. Stage societies dislike punches, and are courageous enough to admit it. They are so afraid of them that they go to the other extreme, and their plays introduce us to people who are always “talking things over.” After they have done this for an entire evening, they land you in an interrogation mark, and you go home

to do the work that the playwrights should have done. These plays are for thoughtful people, of course, but even thoughtful people expect their playwrights to do something for them.

Miss Amélie Rives, who once wrote a novel called “The Quick or the Dead?” which made quite a sensation many, many years ago because it was rather hysterical—and it was quite wonderful to be hysterical twenty years ago—is responsible for our third play with a punch, entitled “The Fear Market,” with the dainty topic of blackmail as its motive. The play has a “prelude” called: “A night in Maggiore”—quite aggressively Italian, and with a most beautiful ultramarine sky. Nothing Italian on the stage could possibly exist without that sky. If I told any playwright that when I was in Naples, the sky always reminded me of Jersey City—it was so beclouded—he would say that such a picture of an Italian sky would outrage the theater’s conventions, which would be a perfectly fiendish thing to do.

In the prelude, a beautiful blond American girl met a fascinating “Italian tenor”—the kind you never see at the Metropolitan Opera House—and she was nearly, but not quite, “lured to her ruin.” She thought he was going to marry her, but he merely loved her, and considered that love was enough—the good old stuff. You sat wondering at the apparent ineptitude of it all, and wondering quite vehemently, because Amélie Rives is a “princess” and you never expect well-regulated princesses-by-marriage to have anything so plebeian as a punch.

After the scene on Maggiore, you were taken to the library—another of those libraries!—of a certain infamous editor of a scandalous gossip sheet. You were shown the subtle methods of the blackmailer—how he fleeced the poor society people who erred in their own artless society way. They were made

to pay by the nose, as the saying is, and the machinery of the sheet was displayed boldly. It was all done by means of a nasty little male society person, who went to all the pink teas and things and then gave away all the misdeeds that he could discover. There was a good deal of all that, and it rather got on one's nerves. However, you could *feel* the punch setting in, as it were, and that gave you a certain amount of courage.

The lovely blonde who didn't go wrong turned out to be the daughter of the blackmailer. Of course he loved her dearly, and she never knew what a villain he was—never even suspected it, which was *so* plausible. The punch in this play occurred in the second act. The fascinating "Italian tenor" had come to this country—perhaps to ap-

pear in vaudeville; who knows?—and one night he was stabbed. He must see the beautiful girl before he died, just to secure her forgiveness. So she picked up a fancy-dress domino and rushed out—out into the night. And then the blackmailer's accomplice saw her, and mistook her, by her domino, for a certain society woman, and just as the whole horrible scandal was about to be published, the villainous old popper learned that the wearer of the domino was—me cheery! Punch!

So now you know what a punch is. It is nothing subtle or delicate—"a blow, as with the fist, or a thrust or nudge, as with the elbow or knee; as a *punch* in the eye." Use both your fists, both your elbows, both your knees. As you haven't horns like a "bovine ruminant," you can't use *them*!



HER HANDS

SHE laid her velvet hand against my cheek,
In the soft silence of the summer night.
The tender action was both bold and meek.
My queen—and yet the slave of my delight!

This sweet surrender of imperious love
Hooded the falcon of my fierce desire.
I turned away—I could not wing this dove;
Her cooling touch was water to my fire.

Verrochio's mistress had not hands more fair,
More subtly maddening in their soft caress;
When they moved up across my brow and hair,
They robbed me of all power, I confess.

O hands of dear and infinite delight,
Your very weakness constitutes your might.

MRS. DAVID S. BISPHAM.



INSIDE THE LINES with the Editor

PREPAREDNESS IN WIRELESS

SOME years ago Congress passed a law requiring privately owned wireless stations in the United States, equipped to send messages, to take out licenses permitting them to operate. The law was intended, by registering and licensing such private plants, to bring them under a certain degree of government control for the purpose of removing the grounds of the many complaints, made by telegraph and wireless companies, of interference with their messages by amateurs.

Some thousands of licenses have been issued under this law, and the complaints have ceased, or, at any rate, the public hears no more of them.

Now, in the natural course of events, there has recently been organized an association of all the licensed amateur wireless operators in the country.

It is in response, possibly, to the agitation for preparedness for war that one of the purposes of the new association, as stated by its organizers, is to render aid to the government in times of disaster, war, or other disorders, by giving prompt information that is likely to be of value to the authorities.

Great things are expected of this new organization, should the need ever arise. It is estimated that there are over three hundred thousand amateur wireless stations in the United States, though a relatively small number of them are registered, many of them not being within the law, as they are merely receiving stations.

A DOCTOR'S OFFICE UP TO DATE

THE most striking setting in a play that has had a very successful run during the past season shows the interior of a doctor's office.

There is, of course, no practical way of finding out how many people there are in the audiences that go to the play who are without any knowledge of such interiors in real life, but it is likely enough that there is an appreciable number. There must be many others who, though they have visited their doctors professionally, have never received any impression as to its details, certainly none as to the elaborate paraphernalia it probably contains.

Here is not only the usual office furniture, desk, chairs, telephone, but scientific apparatus of various kinds, including X-ray and electrical equipment, for examination and treatment; a clinical chair; glass cases for instruments, and the means to keep them aseptic. All these things are shown with strict regard to reality, and their cost probably runs into the hundreds of dollars.

This is supposed to be the equipment of a young man just out of the medical

school, which is an indication, justified by actual fact, of what the practice of modern medicine means, financially, to the practitioner.

Many doctors with an established practice provide themselves not only with an office for consultation, but with what amounts to a private operating room, with all the latest clinical appliances, the floors and walls carefully finished in white tiles, and with a nurse in attendance.

The old-fashioned family doctor of forty or fifty years ago might scorn all this costly elaboration, but then he knew little or nothing of germ theories of disease.

IMMIGRATION AND ILLITERACY

NOT long ago there was more or less agitation of the question as to whether or not what was called the "literacy test" should be applied to immigrants arriving in the United States.

The matter is one of great interest, because the popular impression on the general subject of illiteracy in the United States is so completely at variance with the actual facts.

Most people, at least of those among whom the matter is discussed at all, would probably say that in the New England and Middle Atlantic States, the situation regarding popular education is in a more satisfactory condition than anywhere else in the country, and that it is the South that is backward in this respect.

On the surface this is true, but when the figures on education, given in the census reports of the past fifteen or twenty years, are examined and compared, the discovery is made that in the number and percentage of persons who cannot read or write there has been a very marked decrease in the South, while in three New England States, in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, as well as in several States in the Northwest, the opposite is the case.

The real significance of the figures lies in the fact that it is the foreign-born population that suffers chiefly from educational disability—that is to say, the immigrant class—and that a very large proportion of them have settled down in the northeastern part of the country, attracted, presumably, to the great manufacturing centers.

WOMEN MACHINISTS

A GREAT many accounts have come from Europe, during the past year, telling of the great number of women who have taken up work which was previously done by men, even to labor in the munition factories.

That this movement is not confined to Europe, however, is indicated by the influx of women into the mechanical trades in the United States.

Factory work by women is, of course, not a new thing by any means, but it is only recently that they have invaded the field of the metal workers, where the operation of great steel lathes, punching and drilling machines, and trimming presses, requires not merely special skill, but an unusual degree of muscular strength.

It is said by the officials of such plants that women are taking their places beside the men, and that in many cases the quality of their labor shows an improvement over that of the masculine operators. They earn, on the average, one dollar and seventy-five cents a day, and many of them are married and work in the same shops with their husbands.

All this is due chiefly to a shortage of labor growing out of the immense demands made upon the manufacturing resources of the United States by the belligerents in the European War. Whether the condition, as to women, will be a permanent one, to continue after peace is declared, no one, of course, can predict with any certainty.

SOUNDLESS BATTLES

A COMMUNICATION from a reader of an English scientific periodical affirms that during the battle of Ypres, in Belgium, he heard, quite distinctly, at his house in the south of England, the firing of the artillery, though he was at least one hundred and twenty-five miles distant.

This suggests a phenomenon that was observed at one of the battles of our Civil War, well authenticated by officers of the Confederate army and put upon record. These officers affirm that they were in a position to see the whole of a furiously fought battle, but a mile and a half distant from their post of observation, but that they were unable to hear a sound. The contending armies used both artillery and musketry, and the fight was one of the bloodiest of that particular campaign, but the observers state that they would have known nothing about it if they had not seen it.

It was the battle of Gaines' Mill, which was fought near Richmond, Virginia, early in the summer of 1862, toward the end of what is known as the Peninsular Campaign. The observers watched the battle from a bluff on the south side of the Chickahominy River, and followed all its maneuvers on the opposite side.

Apparently the direction of the wind had nothing to do with the effect produced, for the distance was too slight. So the conclusion naturally suggests itself that the curiosity was the result of some unexplained condition of the atmosphere.

EFFICIENCY OF LIGHTNING RODS

LIGHTNING RODS, so-called, still continue to offer the best means of protection against damage and loss from electrical discharges during thunderstorms, according to an investigator of the United States government.

All sorts of details bearing upon the subject have been collected from available sources, and, from them, this conclusion—of great interest to everybody and especially to those who suffer from a constitutional fear of thunderstorms—has been reached.

It has been estimated, after an analysis of the collected facts, that the danger of loss or damage to houses equipped with efficient lightning rods is almost nine-tenths less than to those without them. This applies to isolated houses in the country, where, of course, the danger is the greatest.

It is in the country, too, that almost all the damage is done. The total losses from lightning aggregate something like eight million dollars annually, and by far the larger part of this is sustained in the sparsely settled districts in the country.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IN the next number of AINSLEE'S, you will meet "The Unspeakable Perk." Samuel Hopkins Adams has never written a more fascinating romance than this one, with its sparkling dialogue, its cleverly suspended mystery, its charming love story, and its rapid action.

"The Unspeakable Perk" himself is the lovable, whimsical sort of hero that might have wandered into one of William J. Locke's novels if a momentary impulse hadn't led him into Mr. Adams' story first. Once there, he found life so entertaining that he couldn't drag himself away.

The dialogue is as bright as any of those involving Anthony Hope's delightful *Dolly*. And, as *Dolly* must be almost approaching the elderly by this time, with her wit tinged a little with acid, we prefer talking to Mr. Adams' charming heroine, Polly Brewster.

As for the South American setting, with its plottings, counterplottings, and sudden flashes of revolution, Richard Harding Davis never put it on paper with more dramatic effect.

Even those earnest seekers after knowledge, to whom W. J. Locke, Anthony Hope, and Richard Harding Davis make no appeal, will learn something to their advantage concerning tarantulas, bubonic plague, rare orchids, and— But no; once they dipped into the story, it would keep them too long away from their encyclopedias. "The Unspeakable Perk" must be confined to the sort of readers who liked "Septimus," "The Dolly Dialogues," "Captain Macklin," and—and—well, the sort of people who would like "The Unspeakable Perk" himself.

THERE is an old Oriental tale of three blind men and an elephant.

"So this is an elephant," said one of them, feeling the curling trunk with inquisitive hands. "It is plain that an elephant differs but slightly from a snake."

"You are wrong," declared the second blind man, who had grasped the elephant's tail. "An elephant most closely resembles a piece of rope."

"Fools!" said the third blind man, passing his hand around the animal's leg. "Any one with half a brain would know that an elephant is like nothing in the world so much as an animated tree trunk."

We can imagine the same sort of argument over the talents of Samuel Hopkins Adams.

"Adams?" one reader would say. "Oh, yes! You mean the public-health man. Exposed all the quack doctors and patent medicines in 'The Great American Fraud'; probably had more to do than any other layman with getting the pure-food law through. He's a member of the Committee of One Hundred on National Health; an associate fellow of the American Medical Association; and he's pretty much of an authority on snake and insect bites—wrote 'The Poison Bugaboo.'"

"No, you must be thinking of some one else," a second reader might say. "Samuel Hopkins Adams is a journalist and an advertising expert. Used to be star reporter on the *Sun*; showed up bad newspapers in his novel 'The Clarion'; afterward became advertising manager of McClure, Phillips & Co.; and is now muckraking dishonest advertisers in the *New York Tribune*."

"You're both wrong," reader No. 3 would be apt to dispute. "The Adams you're talking about is one of the foremost writers of appealing, sprightly, entertaining fiction in this country to-day. Don't you remember the beautiful pathos and humor of 'The Little Fat Fiddler' and his other early stories in the old *McClure's*? Haven't you ever read 'Little Miss Grouch,' or any of his short stories? Why, Adams would be more apt to be an authority on butterflies than on——"

Correct! Mr. Adams is an authority on butterflies, and his contribution of specimens forms an important part of the collection of butterflies and moths in the Smithsonian Institute.

Unless we had been bitten by an unfriendly *agkistrodon contortrix*, or eaten a tin of preserved strawberries that had been made the right color with the wrong dye, we would rather meet the Samuel Hopkins Adams who wrote "The Unspeakable Perk" than any other kind.



WE have been at considerable pains to find sufficiently magnetic companions for "The Unspeakable Perk," to keep him from distracting your attention from the rest of the May number.

In the first place, there is a dramatic romance of the Pacific by John Fleming Wilson, in which an elderly adventurer employs most original meth-

ods to rescue his only son from the lure of a woman he feels is not worthy. In "The Isle of Lydia," Wilson is at his best.

Then there are delightful short stories by Grace MacGowan Cooke and Cornelia A. P. Comer, and two stronger tales by newcomers to AINSLEE'S, "Rachel—Who Understood," by Alice Mary Kimball, and "The Wilderness of Divorce," by Richard Fletcher.

Among other features, Albert Payson Terhune continues his colorful "Stories of the Super-women" with "Anna Brudenel, the Devil Countess of Shrewsbury"; Mrs. Baillie Reynolds concludes her powerful serial, "The Daughter Pays;" and Alan Dale contributes another of his sparkling chats on plays and players.

The more we think of Mr. Terhune's pen portrait of the Countess of Shrewsbury, the better we think it is for Mr. Adams' story that he has his "unspeakable Perk" wear goggles—as long as they are in the same magazine. Otherwise one of them might be tempted to skip a few pages.



APROPOS of "The Quetzal," by Ethel Watts Mumford, in this issue, it is of interest to note that in 1911 the Chinese minister to Mexico found on the pyramid at Mitla, the "city of the dead," in Oajaca, Mexico, a Chinese inscription also found on ancient graves in China.



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No. N75

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LADIES:—With \$12.00 invested in a stock of Sterizol (which can be returned and your money refunded) you can establish yourself in a refined and exclusive business that is permanent and very profitable. Our book—"Who We Are and What We Do"—together with an outline of the big profit to be made with the exclusive sales of Sterizol for your town sent without obligation.

THE STERIZOL CO.,
 224 Sterizol Bldg. Fostoria, O.

SHORTHAND IN 30 DAYS

Boyd Syllabic System—written with only nine characters. No "positions"—no "ruled lines"—no "shading"—no "wood signs"—no "cold notes." Speedy, practical system that can be learned in 30 days of home study, utilizing spare time. For full descriptive matter, free, address, Chicago Correspondence Schools, 975 Unity Building, Chicago, Ill.

FACTORY TO RIDER

1916 Model
 Saves you big money. Buy direct and save \$10 to \$20 on a bicycle. **RANGER BICYCLES** now come in 14 styles, colors and sizes. Greatly improved; prices reduced. Other reliable models, \$11.95 up. **WE DELIVER FREE** to you on approval and 30 days trial and riding test. Our big **FREE** catalog shows everything new in bicycles and sundries. Write for it. **TIRES**, lamps, wheels, parts and supplies at half usual prices. Do not buy a bicycle, tires or sundries until you write and learn our wonderful new offers, low prices and liberal terms. A postal brings everything. **Write now!**
MEAD CYCLE CO. DEPT. H 38, CHICAGO

Don't Wear a Truss



BROOKS' APPLIANCE, the modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that relieves rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves. No lies. Durable, cheap. **Sent on trial to prove it.** Pat. Sept. 10, '01. Catalogue and measure blanks mailed free. Send name and address today.
C. E. BROOKS, 1759 B State Street, Marshall, Mich.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

You Can Earn \$250 MONTH with This NEW MACHINE

Make \$2.00 a year and more to start. You need no experience. Open a Tire Repair Shop with Haywood Equipment. Let the money roll in. Business grows fast. You're soon a real manufacturer. Every auto sold means more tires to mend. Demand for your work ahead of supply.



SEND FOR BIG FREE BOOK

This gives all the facts. Tells how to start. How to succeed. A valuable guide to riches and wealth. Write today. A postal will do. Get your **FREE** copy.

HAYWOOD TIRE & EQUIPMENT COMPANY
 79 Capitol Ave. Indianapolis, Ind.



Typewriters

—All Makes, Factory Result by the famous "Young Process" guaranteed like new. Our big business permits lowest prices—\$10 and up; machines rented—or sold on time. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Rentals apply on purchase price.

Write for Catalog
YOUNG TYPEWRITER COMPANY
 Dept. 468



MAKE YOUR HAIR BEAUTIFULLY CURLY AND WAVY OVER NIGHT

Try the new way —the Silmerine way—and you'll never again use the ruinous heated iron. The curliness will appear altogether natural. **Liquid Silmerine** is applied at night with a clean tooth brush. Is neither sticky nor greasy. Serves also as a splendid dressing for the hair. Directions accompany bottle. Sold by druggists everywhere.



President Wilson's Message on Advertising

Contained in the following
letter to the President of
the Associated Advertising
Clubs of the World



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 11, 1916.

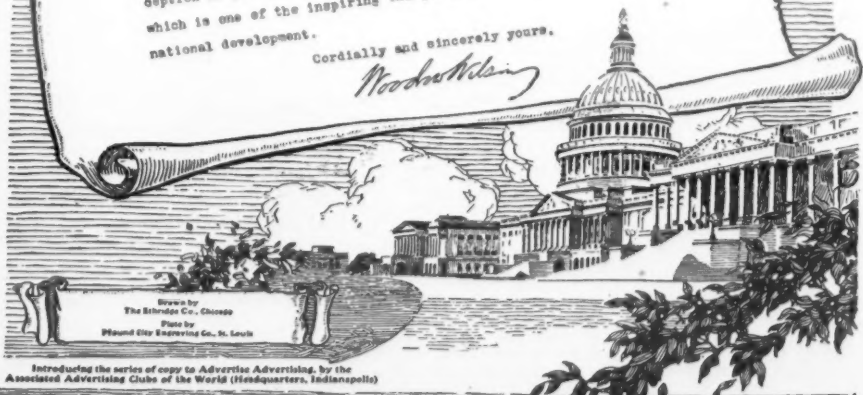
My dear Mr. Houston:

Advertising is a factor of constantly increasing power in modern business, and it very vitally affects the public in all its phases, particularly since the mediums for the dissemination of advertising have increased so remarkably in recent years. For business men, therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the highest standards should be applied to advertising as to business itself.

The country is to be congratulated on the work of the Associated Advertising Clubs to establish and enforce a code of ethics based upon candid truth that shall govern advertising methods, and the effect of its work should be of the greatest benefit to the country. It assures permanence and stability in industrial and distributive methods, because it means good business judgment, and more than that, it indicates a fine conception of public obligation on the part of men in business, a conception which is one of the inspiring things in our outlook upon the future of national development.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

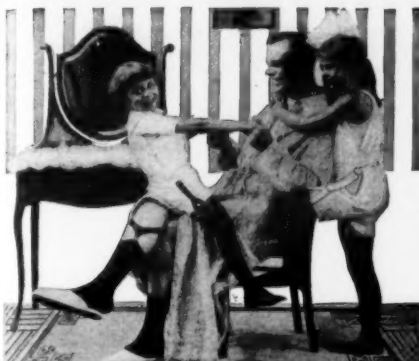
Woodrow Wilson



Printed by
The Standard Co., Chicago
Placed by
Blount City Engraving Co., St. Louis

Introducing the series of copy to Advertise Advertising, by the
Associated Advertising Clubs of the World (Headquarters, Indianapolis)

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



Velvet Grip

FOR ALL THE FAMILY

FOR MEN—The Boston Garter (Velvet Grip) has maintained the leadership for more than 30 years. Worn by men the world over. Silk 50 cents. Lisle 35 cents.

FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN—Velvet Grip Ob-long Rubber Button Hose Supporter prevents "drop stitches." 35 cents a pair. Sets for corsets [four] 50 cents. "Pin-ons" for children, 15 cents.

GEORGE FROST CO., MAKERS, BOSTON

Don't Envy a Beautiful Woman—Be One!

Most women do not stop to think what a few minutes each day and a good cream will do for their complexion. Carelessness is responsible for large pores, rough skin and bad complexion. Beauty is at best but skin deep. Care for it and treasure it, for it is woman's best asset.

The regular use of *Clair Mignon* will remove all dust and impurities from the skin. A trial will prove this to the most discriminating. *Clair Mignon* is a perfect cold cream and is used regularly by New York's Elite Society women. Take advantage at once of this Special Offer.



1-3 the size of regular 50c jar, which will be sent to any address on receipt of price.

SPECIAL OFFER—Send 50c. In stamps for Purse-size of *Clair Mignon* Complexion Powder—enough for two or three weeks. State shade of powder.

MAIN OFFICE AND LABORATORIES
MIGNON CO., 540 West 165th Street, NEW YORK CITY

You Can Weigh Exactly What You Should

You can—I know it, because I have reduced 32,000 women and have built up as many more—scientifically, naturally, without drugs, in the privacy of their own rooms; I can build up your vitality—at the same time I strengthen your heart action; can teach you to breathe, to stand, to walk and to correct such ailments as nervousness, torpid liver, constipation, indigestion, etc.

One pupil writes: "I weigh 83 lbs. less and I have gained wonderfully in strength." Another says: "Last May I weighed 100 lbs., this May I weigh 125, and oh I feel so well."

Write today for my free booklet

SUSANNA COCROFT

Dept. 34, 624 So. Michigan Boulevard, Chicago

Author of "Beauty a Duty," for sale at all bookstores

Earn \$3,000 to \$10,000 Annually BECOME AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT

Unlimited opportunities—500,000 firms need experts. Only 2,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. We train you quickly by mail in spare time for C. P. A. Examinations or executive accounting positions. Knowledge of bookkeeping unnecessary to begin—we prepare you from scratch. Course package entirely paid by Wm. A. Chase, L.L.M., C. F. A., Ex-Secretary Illinois State Board of Examiners in Accountancy and long and well of experts. Low tuition fees—easy terms. Write now for free book of Accountancy facts.
LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. 431-H Chicago, Ill.

NOTE
THE
BIG
CHANGE

Beautiful
Eye-Brows
and Eye-Lashes

Give a face charm, expression, loveliness.
Actresses and Society Women get them by using

LASH-BROW-INE

It makes lashes and eye-brows long, silky, giving depth and soulful expression to the eyes. Pure and Harmless. A guaranteed treatment. Send 25 cts. (coin) and we will mail you package prepaid in plain, sealed cover. Genuine Lash-Brow-Ine sold only by

Maybell Laboratories, 4008 N. Indiana Avenue Chicago, Ill.



Only **\$1.00**
After Trial

Yes, you may keep this New Edison and your choice of records, too, for only a single dollar. Pay the balance at the rate of only a few cents a day. Write today for details.

Free Trial Try the new Edison in your own home before you decide to buy. Have all the newest entertainments. Entertain your friends. We'll send it to you without a cent down.
Write Today for Our New Edison Book. Send your name and address for our new book and pictures of new Edison phonographs. No obligation in writing for book.

F. K. Babson, Edison Phonograph Distributors
1104 Edison Block, Chicago, Illinois

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Agents and Help Wanted

MEN OF IDEAS and inventive ability. New list of "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Dept. 46, Wash., D. C.

CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS open the way to good Government positions. I can coach you by mail at small cost. Full particulars free to any American citizen of 18 or over. Write today for Booklet C, E., Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

I MADE \$50,000 in five years with small mail order business; began with \$5. Send for free booklet. Tells how. Heacock, Box 716, Lockport, N. Y.

AGENTS—GET PARTICULARS OF ONE OF THE BEST paying propositions ever put on the market. Something no one else sells. Make \$4000 yearly. Address E. M. Feltman, Sales mgr., 3049 Third St., Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS—STEADY INCOME. Large manufacturer of Handkerchiefs and Dress Goods, etc., wishes representative in each locality. Factory consumer. Big profits, honest goods. Credit given. Freeport Mfg. Co., 30 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

WILL \$120 a month and Automobile furnished free interest you? Answer quick. Secure valuable agency now to necessities. Guaranteed fast sales. Quick repeaters. Remarkable money makers. Address D. A. Rayburn Co., 181 N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

AGENTS—Here's what they all want. Concentrated Beer Tablets, makes Genuine Beer by adding water. Near Beer—thereal article. Carry odds right in pocket. Enormous demand—large profits. Write us to-day. The Ambrew Co., Dept. 96, Cincinnati, O.

\$20 to \$35 per month extra money any employed person without interfering with regular work. No lying, no canvassing. Positively investment. Unemployed need not apply. Address The Silver Error Co., Inc., 119 W. Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet, Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

GOOD Money Made at Home knitting hosiery. Machines furnished on time. We buy or sell your goods. Easy, constant work. Wheeler Co. (Inc.), Dept. 127, 337 Madison, Chicago.

"AGENTS—400 Snappy Aluminum Specialties and Utensils, means a sale in every home. General Sales Course Free. \$50.00 a week sure. Answerquick. American Aluminum Mfg. Co., Div. S 49, Lemont, Ill."

\$120.00 SURE. Congenial work at home among church people. Man or woman. 60 days or less. Spare time may be used. No experience required. International Bible Press, Dept. OZ, Philadelphia.

WOULD \$150 Monthly as general agent for \$100,000 corporation, and a Ford Auto of your own free, introducing stock and poultry remedies, dips, disinfectants, etc. interest you? Then address Royoleum Co-operative Mfg. Co., D. A. Monticello, Ind.

Female Help Wanted

Five bright, capable ladies to travel, demonstrate and sell dealers. \$25 to \$50 per week. Railroad fare paid. Goodrich Drug Co., Dept. 70, Omaha, Neb.

For the Lame

PERFECTION EXTENSION SHOE for any person with one short limb. No more unsightly cork soles, irons, etc., needed. Work with ready-made shoes. Shipped on trial. Write for booklet. Henry F. Lotz, 313 Third Ave., New York.

Motion Picture Plays

\$50 to \$100 weekly writing Moving Picture Plays. Get free book: valuable information; prize offer. Photo Playwright College, Box 2787, Chicago.

Games & Entertainment

PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Musical Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Entertainments. Make up goods. Large catalog free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 19, Chicago.

Patents and Lawyers

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. Three books with list hundreds of inventions wanted sent free. I help you market your invention. Advice free. R. B. Owen, 39 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—Write for How To Obtain a Patent. List of Patent Buyers and Inventors Wanted. \$1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our 4 books sent free upon request. Patents advertised free. We assist inventors to sell their inventions. Victor J. Evans & Co., Patent Attys., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.


PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS. Send for my free book "How to Get Them." It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, 805 G St., Washington.

Story Writers

WANTED—Stories, articles, poems, etc. We pay on acceptance. Offers submitted. Handwritten Mss. acceptable. Please send prepaid with return postage. Cosmos Magazine, 151 Stewart Bldg., Washington, D. C.

Typewriters

TYPEWRITERS all makes, factory rebuilt by the famous "Young Process" guaranteed like new. Big business permits lowest prices; \$10 and up; machines rented; or sold on time. Rental to apply on purchase price. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Write for catalog. Young Typewriter Co., Dept. 371, Chicago.



TRAVELING MEN

Earn Larger Salaries Than Any Other Class of Men

We will teach you to be a high grade salesman, in eight weeks by mail and assure you definite propositions from a large number of reliable firms who offer our students opportunities to earn good wages while they are learning. No former experience required. Write today for particulars, list of hundreds of good openings and testimonials from hundreds of our students now earning \$100 to \$500 a month. Address nearest Office.

Dept. 503. **NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSN.**
Chicago New York San Francisco



YOU CAN MAKE CIGARETTES LIKE THESE

A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

Sent postpaid for **25 cts.** Address,
Turko Roller Co., Box 38, Station H, New York City

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



The hours need never drag for lack of entertainment if you have a Columbia in your home. And the longer you own a Columbia, the more you will enjoy it—the more you will know what it means and what it *can* mean in pleasure.

COLUMBIA DOUBLE-DISC RECORDS

bring you the liveliest of times: joy-filled evenings, *impromptu* parties—no end of ways in which the Columbia may be used. There's a Columbia dealer near you who can bring these delights—the delights of commanding "All the Music of All the World"—into your home *today*.

New Columbia Records on sale the 20th of every month.



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

The Only Girl—and you!
The brisk morning gallop
Through the fragrant woods
Sweet with wild flowers and budding trees.
Fill up your faithful pipe,
And greet the newborn spring
With that other bounteous gift of Nature—
Rich, mellow, luscious

LUCKY STRIKE

ROLL CUT TOBACCO

LUCKY STRIKE is a mild, pleasant, mellow-sweet Burley, the richest product of the fertile soil and golden sunshine of Kentucky.

For two generations it has been the first, last and all-the-time smoke of the wisest smokers in America—the men who know the best and will take nothing else. Smoke it out-o'-doors as well as in—its delicious flavor makes it a tasty, snappy smoke in any kind of wind and weather.

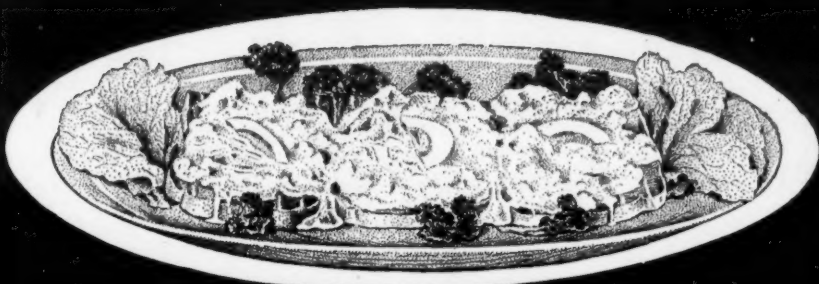
Crumpled just right for a solid but free-burning pipe-smoke or a smooth, compact cigarette.

Neat and handy pocket tin 5c. Also 10c tins and 50c and \$1.00 glass humidors.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



DAINTY OR HEARTY FISH DISHES

Tempting and appetizing dishes for the home table—deliciously good—such as ***Creamed Fish on Toast, Codfish Cakes, Fish Hash, Fish Chowder, Fish Soufflé, Fish Timbales, Fish Croquettes, Scalloped Fish, Fish Salad***—and many others are so simply and quickly made with

Burnham & Morrill Fish Flakes

10c—Sizes—15c (Except in Far West)

Make your choice of a recipe, open a tin, and in a few minutes a most delectable breakfast, luncheon or dinner dish may be made ready for the table. No cooking—no shredding—no boning. No loss of time—no wasted effort—no delayed meals. Just the solid, white meat of freshly caught codfish and haddock—ready to serve you the moment the perfect contents are taken from the parchment-lined tin. **B. & M. Fish Flakes** simplify the cooking question, delight the family and are a fine fish food at a remarkably low price.

INTRODUCTORY OFFER

If you cannot get Burnham & Morrill Fish Flakes from your grocer, mail us one dollar, and we will send you ten of the 10c tins, express prepaid, anywhere east of the Missouri River.

Our new Booklet, "Good Eating," free for the asking.

BURNHAM & MORRILL, CO.

40 Water Street,

Portland, Me.



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

**Why Not Have a
Piano That *All*
The Family Can
Enjoy?**



Jesse French & Sons Player Pianos

**Can be Played by Any
Member of the Family**

Jesse French & Sons Player-Piano is famed for its full, round musical tone. Its operation is so simple a child can play it. The control of expression is perfect. No knowledge of music is necessary to bring out all the feeling and harmony that the composer put into his piece.

Classic, difficult Sonatas, the modern dance music, or ragtime melody are rendered with equal facility. All tastes, all moods, all needs are completely satisfied.

Nearly 40 years of constructive experience is put into every Jesse French & Sons instrument.

We are represented by Leading Piano Dealers all over the United States. If one does not happen to be near you we will ship direct. Easy payment plan if preferred. Liberal Exchange Proposition on your old piano. Handsome Illustrated Catalog sent on request.

Jesse French & Sons Piano Co.

1204 First Avenue, New Castle, Ind.

"Jesse French, a name well known since 1875"

READ

The Bride of a Moment

A romantic, adventurous
detective story, with a
plot of rare subtlety and
ingenuity, by

Carolyn Wells

It begins in serial form
in the April 5th issue of

Detective Story Magazine

Published on the 5th and
20th of each month

On sale everywhere at
ten cents a copy




DIAMONDS. AND WATCHES ON CREDIT

GREAT DIAMOND SALE

The most astounding sale of perfect cut diamonds ever offered.
TERMS LOW AS \$1.50 PER MONTH
This is your opportunity to get that long wanted diamond at a bargain.
This is an extraordinary saving.
SPECIAL \$39.50 GENUINE DIAMOND RING
A wonderful value \$4.50 per month. A written guarantee with every purchase you make from ALFRED WARE.
SENSATIONAL ELGIN WATCH SALE.
\$12.50 Elgin Watch 17 Ruby Jewels 25 year guaranteed double gold strata case. Factory tested and adjusted.
Payments \$2.00 Per Month.
30 Days Trial
No Money Down Express Paid
Any watch you want on easy payments. Be sure to send for our 96 page catalogue. Over 500 suggestions. Watches, Jewelry, Diamonds. This book describes our big bargains in all lines. All sold on Easy Payments and Free Trial. Send for it this minute. A postal will bring it.
ALFRED WARE COMPANY, Dept. 507 St. Louis, Mo.

Big Free Catalog




Wrinkles

Thousands have successfully used this formula to remove traces of age, illness or worry: 1 oz. of pure

Powdered SAXOLITE

dissolved in 1/2 pt. witch hazel; use as a face wash. The effect is almost magical. Deepest wrinkles, crow's feet, as well as finest lines, completely and quickly vanish. Face becomes firm, smooth, fresh, and you look years younger. No harm to tenderest skin. Get genuine Saxolite (powdered) at any drug store.



AINSLIE'S MAGAZINE

is printed with inks manufactured by

W. D. WILSON PRINTING INK CO., LTD.,

17 SPRUCE STREET, NEW YORK CITY



Men Wanted \$35 to \$100 A Week

This is your great opportunity to qualify for a big position of importance. Right now thousands of large shippers and all railroads need Traffic Experts and Managers.

Become a Traffic Man

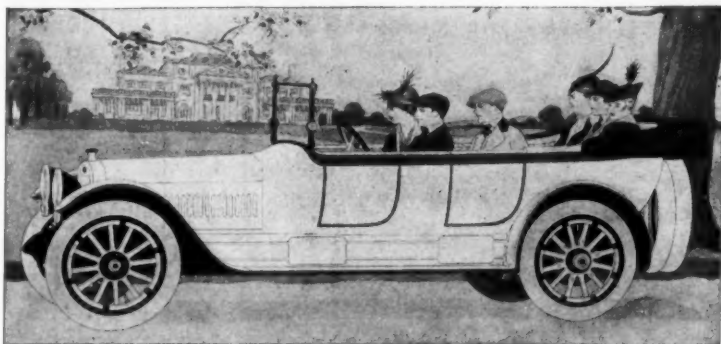
Recently enacted railroad and Interstate Commerce regulations necessitate trained Traffic specialists. The need is greater than the supply. You can quickly qualify for one of these important positions, no matter what your work is now. We make it easy. We train you by mail at home in spare time. (Payments to suit you.)

WRITE now for "10 Years' Experience in One" big possibilities now open and proof that NOW is time to start. Send no money—everything free.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 431-C Chicago

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

WINTON SIX



Just so Long as People have Eyes

they will always pay admiration to beauty. And it is a great error to buy a car lacking this distinction. ☞ Beauty never requires apologies, nor explanations. It is accepted everywhere at face value, as proof of quality, because *only those makers who take the time to build excellent cars ever take the additional time to make them really beautiful.* ☞ Commonplace cars look monotonously alike, and that monotonous repetition defeats beauty. But the genuinely superior car, designed and finished to meet the exclusive personal taste of its individual buyer, stands out cheerfully as the well-built and carefully selected possession of one who is accustomed to the good things of life. The visible beauty of his car is in harmony with its mechanical excellence. ☞ You can have everything that is desirable in a motor car when you order a Winton Six. ☞ Let us talk it over with you.

TWO SIZES

33 - - - \$2285
48 - - - \$3500

Complete information
on request.

We submit individual
designs on approval.

The Winton Company

122 Berea Road, Cleveland, Ohio



The Grip in the Knobs

The knobs on the 'Nobby' Tread "bite" the road-surface like a file on metal.

The traction is so intense that it is next to impossible for the tread to slip or skid.

It is the angle, height, thickness, toughness and resiliency of the knobs that make 'Nobby' Treads the surest of anti-skid tires—the Aristocrats of the Road.

While 'Nobby' Tread sales have increased phenomenally, adjustments (on the basis of five thousand miles) have gone down to an almost unwritably small fraction of the total sales.

United States Tire Company

'Nobby' 'Chain' 'Usco' 'Royal Cord' 'Plain'
"INDIVIDUALIZED TIRES"



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

"Swift's Premium"

*Buy it
Whole!*



Cut center slices for
Broiling or Frying

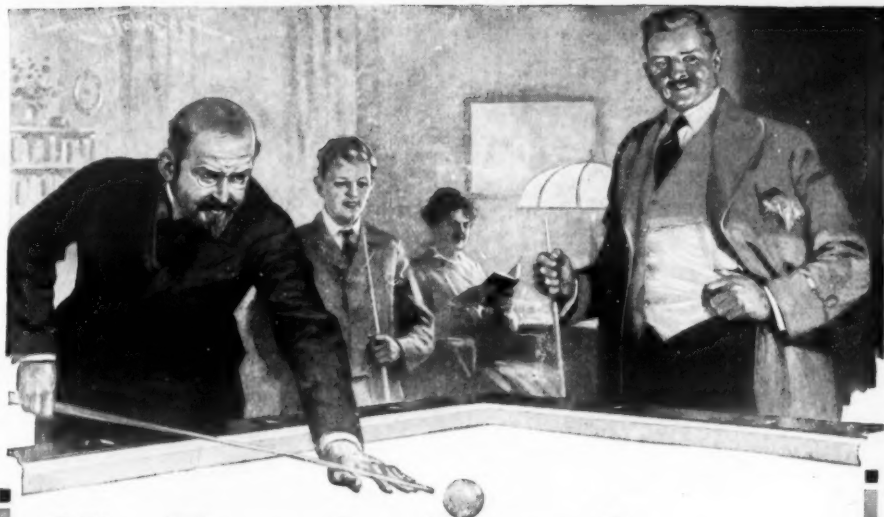


Bake the Butt



Boil the Shank





His Favorite Remedy—

These days physicians prescribe Home Billiards to keep the whole family *rolling in health!* All that the doctor calls for now is to take his own medicine on the Brunswick "Baby Grand." This famous home table brings 33 carom and pocket billiard games. Year-round sport that banishes brain fag, aids digestion and *puts new blood into folks who work all day!*

Send for our catalog at once, and join this movement for "home preparedness."

BRUNSWICK Home Billiard Tables

Now \$27 Up—Pay 10c a Day

Whether mansion or cottage—there's a grown man's Brunswick made to fit your home.

Brunswick "Grand" and "Baby Grand" are made of genuine San Domingo mahogany richly inlaid.

Our "Quick Demountable" can be set up in a jiffy anywhere, and taken down quickly when not in use.

"Convertible" Brunswicks serve as perfect dining and library tables when not in play for carom or pocket billiards.

Scientific Qualities

Every Brunswick is a scientific table with ever-level billiard bed, celebrated Monarch cushions—life! speed! and accuracy! Why be content with a toy billiard table when 10c a day buys a genuine Brunswick!



Brunswick "Baby Grand"
Combination Carom and
Pocket Table

Balls, Cues, Etc., FREE!

Complete High Class Playing Outfit included without extra cost—Rack, Markers, Balls, Cues, Cue-Clamps, Tips, Chalk, expert book of 33 games, etc.

30-Day Home Trial

Accept our trial offer and let the Brunswick win every member of the family. Factory prices, easy payment plan and all Brunswick Home Tables shown in our handsome color-book—"Billiards—The Home Magnet." It's FREE. Write or mail the coupon today.

This Brings Billiard Book FREE

The Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. (514)

Dept. 28W 623-633 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

Send free, postpaid, your color-book—

"Billiards—The Home Magnet"

and tell about your free trial offer.

Name.....

Address.....

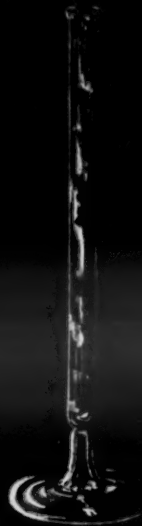
*"Consider the Lilies of the Field,
How They Grow"*



The life of the lily is but a few transient hours. The life of man is "three score years and ten."

But to live his life in its fulness, man—like the lily—must be nourished by those same vital elements which Nature provides for nourishing every living thing; and these include the valuable mineral phosphates so often lacking in the usual dietary.

Grape-Nuts food is rich in these wonderful elements. It has delicious taste, is made of the entire nutrition of whole wheat and barley, and from youth to old age, builds and rebuilds body and brain in beautiful harmony with Nature's perfect plan.



"There's a Reason" for Grape-Nuts